Examining changes in teacher education programs: A case study approach

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ABSTRACT

This study retrospectively examines teaching practice within Israeli teacher education programs. A pilot study investigates the implementation of a novel teacher education program in Israeli academia, with a focus on the freedom it grants to institutions. This program emerged during the Covid-19 crisis when e-learning dominated. The study assesses 45 respondents' perceptions of teaching practice and the academia-school relationship through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. On the quantitative front, the study involved the examination of several questionnaires. These included a self-efficacy questionnaire, an attitude survey regarding teaching, an evaluation of professional identity, and an attitude questionnaire centered on practical experiences within schools. In the assessment of self-efficacy, we utilized a modified version of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE). Additionally, the researchers crafted the other questionnaires. The study also encompassed an exploration of student satisfaction levels concerning collaboration during practical experiences, the acquisition of various skills during school-based practice, and the correlation between the teacher training program's different courses and practical work within school settings. The research covered the documentation and formative assessment of the design and alteration processes within teacher education based on the outlined changes. The study evaluated these processes through primary documents from the academic institution, which provided evidence of the change preparation. It also analyzes the goals, learning outcomes, and teaching methods for students specializing in education. The study highlights changes in teaching practice that foster connections between academia and the field, particularly in pedagogy. These changes focus on the intensified school-based experience, paired with e-teaching workshops. Findings reveal that in evaluating teaching practice competence, interpersonal skills and professional identity rank highly among skills gained during field experiences. The research also showcases the acquisition of essential teaching and class management skills. The study raises questions regarding the program's impact on institutions, particularly concerning its role in enhancing autonomy and relevance. The study evaluates the program's potential as a catalyst for effective teacher education and its ability to attract mission-driven, motivated individuals to the teaching profession.

Keywords: Teaching practice, teacher education, academia, e-learning.

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INTRODUCTION

In the global context and specifically in Israel, the learning outcomes of educational programs are designed to align with the societal needs of the present time and location. The scope of the study encompasses inquiries into various aspects. These include understanding the cognitive, social, and ethical objectives of both the educational institution and its students. As the educational landscape evolves, the school itself undergoes changes, consequently influencing the role of educators. This research focuses on the evolution of teacher education programs in Israel over a span of 20 years. It also delves into the implementation of a novel curriculum framework and the preparatory measures associated with it. An in-depth exploration was conducted, including a case study

of a university in Israel, to scrutinize the efficacy of a new program. Additionally, the research investigates the perceptions of academic students regarding changes in the study program and their assessment of its contributions to their training.

GLOBAL CHANGES AND THE NEED TO UPDATE THE QUALITY OF TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS EVALUATION OF A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Teaching in the 21st century presents greater complexity and challenges compared to the past. This complexity is a result of profound global transformations, including the impact of globalization, the rapid development and widespread availability of knowledge due to technological advancements, and the evolving role of individuals in this new reality. Educators across all age groups play a central role in guiding and shaping the values of children and teenagers as they navigate a changing, often ambiguous, and sometimes deceptive world, marked by fundamental changes in various aspects of life.

In the current era, the challenges underscore the significance of social and moral dimensions in the work of teachers and educators. Their focus is on promoting the mental well-being and overall welfare of individuals and groups. Achieving these goals requires the strengthening of social-emotional skills and the development of personal and interpersonal abilities. These encompass self-confidence, empathy, active listening, collaboration, creativity, flexibility, and engagement in civic life.

In today's dynamic and interdisciplinary reality, knowledge is viewed as an evolving, interactive entity. It is constructed through adaptable strategies and literacies, including cognitive, emotional, verbal, social, digital, managerial, creative, critical, and collaborative skills. The continual evolution of knowledge and the requisite skills raise questions about the objectives of teaching, learning, and assessment within the education system. Additionally, they prompt considerations about the level of guidance and training that can be provided to educators, including teachers and kindergarten teachers, as they navigate a rapidly changing world with an uncertain future.

In recent years, there has been increasing pressure on teacher education programs to demonstrate their quality, monitor the efficacy of their graduates' teaching, and utilize data for program improvement. Evaluating program quality involves various methods, including surveys gauging graduates' perceptions. These surveys, conducted upon course completion or within the first year of teaching, offer three key advantages: prompt feedback on program quality, specific insights into training components, and a direct assessment of program excellence (distinct from the indirect assessment of teaching quality in graduates).

Bastian et al. (2021) established a strong positive correlation between graduates' perceptions of training program quality and the assessment of their own teaching quality within schools. The link is evident: the more positively graduates rate their training program, the higher the quality of their teaching. Lidor et al. (2016) found substantial alignment between the directing outlines and new teacher education programs approved by the Council for Higher Education (CHE). However, it appears that the input from lecturers and pedagogic instructors was relatively limited in shaping the new program. Notably, substantial decision-making authority is granted to high-ranking professionals within the teacher education institutions.

Researchers claim that the quality of teachers is disputable (Akiba and Le Tendre, 2017) and find that a consensus is gradually emerging among educators whereby the quality of teachers is based not only on their pre-service training, in-service training, and knowledge accumulated (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018).

In the digital era, teachers are morphing into knowledge curators, guides, and facilitators, while students take on more responsibility for sourcing and presenting information (Martin et al., 2019). To thrive in this evolving landscape, educators must foster interpersonal connections and valuable learning experiences. They structure lessons, empower students, assign authentic tasks, and provide prompt feedback, all while maintaining regular communication. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic shifted learning online, prompting teachers to adapt materials and foster emotional resilience (Ben-Amram and Davidovitch, 2021). This changing reality underscores the need for flexible and interactive teaching methods.

Adapting the education system to the digital information era is imperative, especially for teacher training. Introducing digital teaching and learning to K-12 schools is vital for equipping graduates with essential life skills. Schools embracing information and communication technologies (ICT) will witness transformative shifts in teaching methods and the teacher's role. The interplay of pedagogy and technology creates stimulating learning situations. However, the educational system struggles to keep pace with rapid technological changes, creating a discrepancy between students' daily lives and school learning environments (Ben-Amram and Davidovitch, 2021). A comprehensive study reveals that fewer than 40% of high school students are involved in learning. Students expect ICT integration in schools, mirroring their experiences at home and elsewhere.

REFORMS IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

Teacher education in Israel has encountered persistent challenges, prompting the establishment of twelve committees seeking solutions. Despite their efforts, the practical implementation of their recommendations remains limited. Globally, two distinct reform approaches shape teacher education: one focuses on enhancing

professional training, encompassing advanced academic studies in teaching, education sciences, and pedagogy, along with supervised practical experience in schools. The other approach, often championed by public figures, prioritizes the academic achievements of the school children. The latter approach asserts that lengthy formal training is not essential for teaching; competence in subject matter suffices. Thus, alternatives to traditional training programs are proposed, emphasizing the integration of teachers with diverse social, professional, and academic backgrounds for improved teaching quality (Lidor et al., 2016).

As early as the 2000s, Kfir and Ariav (2004) highlighted the challenges faced by the education system in recruiting quality teachers. Factors like demanding working conditions, inadequate compensation, and the lower status of academic colleges for teacher training contributed to the issue. The Ministry of Education's publication, focused on pedagogical research and development aligned with future trends (Morgernstern et al., 2016), starts with the words: "In order to prepare those studying in Israel's educational system for the unknown future reality, it is necessary to understand the trends expected to affect the world of education". This document outlines the foundational principles guiding teacher education reforms, influenced by social, technological, and other trends, along with their accompanying challenges and requirements.

In 2005, the CHE and the Ministry of Education jointly established a committee aimed at formulating universal principles for teacher education across all Israeli training institutions. These principles outlined the study structure, field experience, admission criteria, and faculty requirements. They aimed to bring consistency to teacher education programs offered by diverse academic institutions (colleges of education and universities) and across different diploma tracks (integrated Bachelor's programs, academic-to-teacher retraining, Master's programs, and alternative tracks for unique populations) (Lidor et al., 2016).

Teaching holds a prominent place in public discourse, being viewed as a meaningful profession. Teachers are expected to possess a broad intellectual horizon, expertise in multiple disciplines, pedagogical knowledge, analytical skills, learning agility, and social awareness. They are required to demonstrate sensitivity, dialogue proficiency, teamwork, and managerial prowess. Thus, comprehensive attention to teacher training and cultivating professional, high-quality educators is essential. The research underscores the significant positive correlation between teacher education and student achievements, highlighting the need for a strong social focus in teacher training (Ruffinelli et al., 2021).

Thus, the teacher education system is subjected to regulation as well as constant control and updating. The global discourse on teacher education underscores the pursuit of teacher quality, as evident in reports by the OECD. Shaped by globalization, teacher education factors in various considerations, with education goals influencing the skills and knowledge imparted to future teachers. This compels efforts to comprehend and reform teacher education practices, including the development of personal and professional identities (Singh et al., 2021). Emphasis lies on teacher quality and the establishment of certification, funding, and oversight mechanisms. The objective is no longer solely achieving student learning outcomes but enhancing pedagogical effectiveness within a global social context. This scrutiny prompts ongoing evaluation of the educational system's performance and student outcomes (Lidor et al., 2016), resulting in continuous regulatory measures and updates in teacher education.

The Ariav program

The purpose of the Ariav program (implemented 2006 to 2016) was to establish consistency among teacher education programs across various academic institutions, enhance the quality of teaching candidates, and grant them academic status. This initiative led to raised admission standards at colleges of education, mandating PhD qualifications for academic faculty, and introducing structural adjustments to teacher education programs, adopted by all teacher training institutions (Lidor et al., 2016). Resolutions from the CHE on November 21, 2006, highlight three key program innovations (Hofman and Niederland, 2010):

1. Elevating the quality of graduating teachers through uniform admission and graduation terms, intensified training levels, etc.
2. Aligning teacher education with international trends by revising study formats, emphasizing field experience, and adjusting content.
3. Enhancing the status of teacher education within Israel's higher education system by structuring programs akin to higher education standards and granting academic validity to teaching diploma studies (CHE resolutions document, 2006).

Despite criticisms, institutions embraced the program. Some argued that changes concentrated on organizational aspects rather than fundamental educational issues such as melding disciplinary and educational studies or accommodating diverse student populations (Lidor et al., 2016).

Ran (2017) evaluates program implementation, revealing variations among institutions. For instance, the Arab sector allocated more hours to teaching all components than the state and state-religious sectors. Most institutions prioritized pedagogy teaching hours over research literacy. Though success could only be assessed over time, the institutions reported positive trends,

particularly regarding field experience. Distinctions arose in the program's execution across institutions, affecting study program design, allocation of hours for pedagogy and disciplinary studies, and domains within teacher education (education, pedagogy, research literacy, field experience, and enrichment). Despite the organizational emphasis on fundamental changes, program unity and professionalization in teacher education emerged. Implementing the outlines bolstered disciplinary studies at academic colleges and education and teaching studies at universities, extending to training program inspections in Israel.

FROM OUTLINE TO OUTLINE – FROM PROGRAM TO PROGRAM

Currently, there are 25 teacher education programs in operation across Israeli colleges and universities (Fisher et al., 2022). These programs result from periodic discussions, research, and agreements with the aim of enhancing education in the country. The phrase "from outline to outline" encapsulates the need for ongoing research, assessment of implementation, and evaluation of outcomes (Eisenberg and Selivansky Eden, 2019; Ran, 2017).

To address 21st-century challenges, a committee of researchers was formed to explore novel approaches for organizing Israel's educational system. Their recommendations highlighted the necessity for well-prepared, adept, and skilled teachers, along with continuous and adaptable professional development (Eisenberg and Selivansky Eden, 2019).

The modifications in training programs appear in line with the requirement to adapt the educational system to present circumstances (Kihara, 2021). Studies reveal that training educators with advanced digital skills cultivate both professional and personal attributes. These include the ability to realize potential, engage in constructive and creative work, establish strong connections, and contribute to the community. Such training has also been linked to life satisfaction and mental stability. Professionally, these educators develop heightened creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, meta-cognitive learning, communication, cooperation, information literacy, personal and social responsibility, and a readiness to respond to societal changes (Kihara, 2021).

THE WADMANY-INBAR PROGRAM

In 2017, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) collaborated with the Ministry of Education to establish an expert committee to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the structure and framework of teacher training programs within Israeli higher education institutions. This committee was entrusted with a crucial mission: to deliberate on and institute essential updates and revisions aimed at enhancing the structure, format, and educational objectives of the existing teacher education program. At its core, the committee's overarching purpose was to propel the training of professional educators who embody a profound commitment to solid disciplinary knowledge, exemplary pedagogical skills, and a keen understanding of their students' personal, social, and emotional needs.

Commonly referred to as the Wadmani-Inbar curriculum, this initiative was closely aligned with legislative resolutions passed on November 21, 2006. These resolutions mandated a thorough evaluation a decade after the introduction of the teaching training guidelines, recognized as the Ariav curriculum. In 2017, the CHE, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, established a committee that operated for approximately three years. The committee deliberated on essential updates and revisions to the existing teacher education program, aiming to enhance the program's structure, format, and educational objectives. The committee's purpose was to advance the training of professional educators who possess solid disciplinary knowledge, high pedagogical skills, and a deep understanding of students' personal, social, and emotional needs. The key points of the developed program are as follows:

• Training institutions will be vested with academic authority to tailor training programs in line with their specific vision, values, and needs.
• Teacher education programs will integrate interactive technology and adapt to the evolving work landscape.
• Admission criteria will assess candidates' social, behavioral, and emotional competencies alongside academics.
• Field experience hours in the program will significantly increase.
• Study content will encompass social-emotional learning, multicultural coexistence, anti-racism, gender and sexuality awareness, and conflict resolution.
• Teachers across age groups will receive training for educating children with special needs (CHE resolutions document, 2021).

The program addresses rapid technological advancements, emphasizing the alignment between educational requirements and technological and digital resources. These resources enable the educational system to foster active learning, critical thinking, innovation, and creativity. Preparing new teachers for the digital era underscores the importance of educators utilizing digital tools to create online communities, curate content, utilize apps and games, and effectively implement advanced teaching methodologies in schools (Wadmany and Melamed, 2021).

The curriculum embraces a significant principle of autonomy, where institutions providing teacher training

have the responsibility and academic autonomy for planning and training. This autonomy allows these institutions to reflect their unique vision, ideology, values, and specific needs. Consequently, each training institution has the flexibility to determine how students fulfill the required 12 hours of clinical experience.

Traditionally, students were mandated to complete 12 hours of clinical experience at schools. However, under the new "Wadmani-Inbar" curriculum, each institution has the discretion to decide what students will do during these 12 hours. This may include various formats such as face-to-face, digital, hybrid teaching, or other innovative teaching methods.

In the case study featured in this research, the 12 hours were divided into 6 hours of clinical experience at schools and 6 hours of participation in digital workshops, offering innovative tools for today's educators. The implementation of the new curriculum grants institutions autonomy and the freedom to decide how to structure and conduct the 12 hours of clinical experience.

A NEW TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM DEVELOPED IN RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES POSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, the educational landscape faced unprecedented challenges, prompting a close examination of teacher education programs. The pandemic exacerbated the system's demands, leading to teacher burnout and attrition (Ramot and Donitsa-Schmidt, 2021; Weißenfels et al., 2022). Teachers grappled with adapting to remote learning, technological hurdles, increased workload, altered routines, and working remotely (Donitsa-Schmidt et al., 2021). Alongside pandemic-related fears, educators navigated novel professional difficulties and separation from students, colleagues, and familiar support systems (Zadok-Gurman et al., 2021).

Data from the Israel National Council for the Child (2021) revealed that 13.7% of students had problems with regular participation in remote learning during the pandemic. Notably, about 20% of students lacked access to computers, while 29 to 38% faced unstable internet connections (Israel National Council for the Child, 2021).

The pandemic necessitated rapid adaptation and solutions. Despite setbacks, a shift towards hybrid learning emerged, offering a blend of school and home-based education (Frank, 2021). The post-pandemic era aims to prioritize social skills, values, and personal attention, with teachers playing a key role in students' holistic development (Frank, 2021; Bar-Zohar and Josefsberg Ben-Yehoshua, 2020).

Dahan, Shaham and Shorezki (2021) proposed privatizing Israel's education system to address teacher shortages. Their suggestion involves reducing government involvement and shifting responsibility to the private sector. This approach aims to prompt competition among schools, encouraging unique offerings to attract students and parents. School principals would seek resources from various sources to enhance teacher status. Such competition and progress could also influence changes in public schools (Dahan et al., 2021).

Amidst these changes, teacher education programs must also evolve. The current study investigates the adaptation of teacher education programs, focusing on a 75-20 year perspective since Israel's independence, and assessing the implementation of the new program. The research aims to understand the interplay between teacher training institutions and schools, exploring academic students' perceptions of clinical training experiences. This investigation is critical for enhancing the educational system's ability to prepare teachers for the evolving demands of the 21st century (Wadmany and Melamed, 2021; Mikulincer et al., 2020).

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE AS ONE OF THE CORE COMPONENTS OF THE TEACHERS' TRAINING PROGRAM

The focal point of teacher training is the teaching experience, encompassing its various facets and subtleties within a guided and controlled clinical process. This experience serves as a bridge between the academic components of discipline(s), education, and pedagogy, combining theoretical coursework with practical field-based training. Teaching experience offers the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios, fostering engagement in curriculum planning, addressing educational and ethical dilemmas, honing classroom management skills, tailoring instruction to individual student needs (personalized learning), collaborating within teams, considering socio-emotional aspects within individual and group dynamics, and engaging with parents and the community. Throughout this experience, students actively participate in educational activities within both kindergarten and school settings, gaining valuable insights through reflective observation of teaching and learning while exploring various issues that emerge during their fieldwork.

Enhancing clinical experiences, with a focus on aligning them with the descriptive courses taught as part of teacher training, represents a pivotal strategy for enhancing the capabilities of new teachers and the overall teaching workforce. To achieve this shared goal, teacher educators should consider several key steps, including crafting a cohesive vision and curriculum that integrates coursework and hands-on experiences, developing assignments and opportunities that bridge theory and practice, forging partnerships with schools to support exemplary teaching in diverse classrooms, implementing strategies for assessing the beginning teacher's teaching proficiency, and offering continuous feedback to improve training

programs (Darling-Hammond, 2014).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

a. What is the impact of the Wadman-Inbar outline's changes, and how are they implemented in the case study?
b. What motivates academic students to pursue a career in teaching?
c. How do academic students in teacher training programs evaluate their chance of working as teachers upon graduation?
d. How do the students assess their readiness for teaching and learning in a school environment, considering four key aspects: their knowledge acquisition during field experiences, classroom management skills, teaching effectiveness, and interpersonal communication abilities?
e. What are the students' views on the field experience at school: examining how the school practice is organized, the frequency of activities, the command of the contents and skills taught, the frequency of observations and feedback given, as well as the frequency of participating in different school activities?

METHODOLOGY

Research tools

The research employed a methodological blend of both qualitative and quantitative analyses.

In the qualitative aspect, the study delved into various facets of implementing changes within a novel teacher training program. It scrutinized the extent to which these changes were put into practice, along with the methodologies employed for their implementation. This analysis was conducted using primary documents sourced from the academic institution, which provided insights into the preparations made for the impending changes.

On the quantitative front, the study involved the examination of several questionnaires. These included a self-efficacy questionnaire, an attitude survey regarding teaching, an evaluation of professional identity, and an attitude questionnaire centered on practical experiences within schools. In the assessment of self-efficacy, we utilized a modified version of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) developed by Schwarzer et al. (1995). Additionally, the researchers crafted some other questionnaires. The study also encompassed an exploration of student satisfaction levels concerning collaboration during practical experiences, the acquisition of various skills during school-based practice, and the correlation between the teacher training program's different courses and practical work within school settings.

To assess the implementation of the "Wadmani-Inbar curriculum," three perspectives were examined:

Organizational perspective: This qualitative examination explored how institutions adapted to the curriculum's guidelines within their teacher training programs, examining changes in their approach.

Pedagogical perspective: This quantitative assessment encompassed various aspects of student experiences during their training, including the quality of their preparation for teaching, the effectiveness of their teaching, student engagement, opportunities to observe veteran teachers' lessons, the frequency of feedback provided to students and its impact on their professional and emotional development, student involvement in school or kindergarten activities, and the alignment between their experiential learning and theoretical coursework.

Outcomes: This quantitative assessment evaluated the contribution of the training experience to students' acquisition of diverse pedagogical skills, their satisfaction with the training received, and their perceived readiness for teaching.

The quantitative questionnaires were developed based on surveys administered to research students at the Kibbutz Seminar in 2019 (Zazovsky, 2019).

Research participants

The study involved 45 teaching students, predominantly female, with a focus on high school field experience. The average age of the participants was 31, with 84.6% being native Hebrew speakers. In terms of field experience, 61.5% were engaged in high school teaching, 15.4% in junior high schools, and 77% were concurrently employed in unrelated external positions during the school year.

FINDINGS

The first research question explored the transformation in the teacher education program and its application within the case study. In the university case study, the process of change in the teacher education program adhered to several key principles.

Adaptation to institutional vision and culture

That is why, during the five years of the program's operation, the primary focus has been to prepare graduates in response to the changing demands of the world around us. The new program's flexibility allows the university to align its ethical and academic objectives, emphasizing innovation, technology, and research impact. While the university's vision has traditionally centered on these aspects, it may not explicitly encompass education.

To initiate this change process, meetings were conducted with various stakeholders, including the Department of Education's lecturers to incorporate interdisciplinary evaluation pedagogies, pedagogic instructors to enhance the "classroom-academia" model and field experience, and the Center for Simulations in Education to integrate simulation workshops throughout courses and internships."

The university's established learning outcomes for the new program, with a particular focus on clinical training, are as follows:

• **Integrating disciplinary field experience:** Blending the teacher's diploma program with subject-specific educational field experience

• **Equipping graduates for an uncertain teaching landscape:** Imparting graduates with the knowledge, tools, and skills to navigate diverse teaching methods in an ever-changing and uncertain educational landscape.

• **Facilitating active learning and critical thinking:** Promoting active learning that fosters critical thinking encourages students to question, present academic arguments, and address theoretical, ethical, and current challenges.

Principles of the university's implemented teacher training program post-assimilation

The principles of the new teacher education program, as put into practice following the change, encompass:

1. Student-centered teaching with continuous evaluation and adaptation to student needs.
2. Teaching interns teach at least one day a week at a school for one year, concurrent with their theoretical studies. The interns are also active at the school in the classrooms, teacher's lounge, parent-teacher meetings, and others.
3. Interns engage in self-observation and receive feedback (courses in methods/didactics/simulation courses are videotaped).
4. The interns have many opportunities to link their experience in the classroom to the information they receive in their courses.
5. Training incorporates methods for evaluating schoolchildren.
6. Structured reflection opportunities enhance teaching skills and promote self-improvement (peer teaching).
7. In different courses, the lecturers decide that the interns' academic assignments shall be linked and based on their field experience at the school.
8. Observation of experienced teachers fosters learning efficient practices.
9. Holistic support through workshops prepares interns for transition to the educational system.
10. The program alteration includes 12 annual hours of teaching practice, combining elective courses and school-based experience.

In summary, the change scrutinized goals, learning outcomes, and practical training, and expanded the pedagogic instructor's role. This shift enhances the academic-field connection within the pedagogic-academic sphere.

The second research question examined the reasons behind the respondents' decision to pursue a teaching career. The study revealed that the primary motivation for choosing teaching was interest and alignment with the respondents' abilities (rated at 4.23), followed by employment prospects and compensation considerations (rated at 3.92). The aspiration for career advancement and obtaining a comprehensive education (rated at 3.54) moderately influenced the decision (rated at 3.62), while factors like social-ethical considerations and a sense of mission held less weight (rated at 2.46).

The third research question examined how respondents assessed their prospects of becoming teachers after completing their studies. The respondents were asked to evaluate their chances of working as teachers after graduation. Their evaluations indicated a moderate level of confidence in their prospects (3.31).

The fourth research question focuses on students' self-assessment of their preparedness for teaching and learning within a school setting. This assessment encompasses four critical dimensions: knowledge acquired in the field experiences, proficiency in classroom management, teaching effectiveness, and interpersonal communication abilities.

ASPECTS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Extent of knowledge acquired in the field experience ($\alpha = 0.94$)

A high level of knowledge gained through field experience was observed in the disciplinary field (3.46), general teaching methods (3.46), and knowledge related to lesson planning and social dynamics within the classroom (3.46). Respondents indicated less proficiency in teaching methods specific to their field (3.31) and in the study programs within their field of specialty (3.15) (Table 1).

Classroom management ability ($\alpha = 0.89$)

Respondents demonstrated a strong perception of their self-efficacy in various areas of effective classroom management: involving schoolchildren in the learning process (4.00), serving as role models for the schoolchildren (4.00), and enhancing schoolchildren's

capabilities (4.00). Their efficacy was lower when it came to taking into account the individual, group, and systemic needs when planning lessons (3.92), establishing behavioral norms and values in the classroom (3.77), and maintaining classroom boundaries (3.38) (Table 2).

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of knowledge acquired in the different areas.

	M	*SD*
Disciplinary field	3.46	1.20
Teaching methods specific to their field	3.31	1.11
General teaching methods	3.46	.97
Social dynamics within the classroom	3.46	.77
Knowledge related to lesson planning	3.46	.97
Study programs within their field of specialty	3.15	.99
Total	3.38	1.00

α = .94

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of self-efficacy regarding class management.

	M	*SD*
In maintaining classroom boundaries	3.38	.96
In establishing behavioral norms and values in the classroom	3.77	.83
Involving schoolchildren in the learning process	4.00	.71
In serving as role models for schoolchildren	4.00	.71
In enhancing schoolchildren's personal capabilities	4.00	.58
In taking into account the individual, group, and systemic needs when planning lessons	3.92	.76
Total	3.84	.76

α = .89

Teaching skills level (α = 0.93)

Respondents displayed a high level of self-efficacy in their teaching skills, particularly in areas such as learning from others to enhance teaching (4.08), effective lesson planning (4.00), clear presentation of course material (4.00), and fostering intrinsic schoolchildren's motivation to learn (4.00). Conversely, respondents reported lower efficacy in constructing diverse learning experiences (3.92), selecting assessment methods and tools (3.85), and utilizing student feedback to enhance instruction (3.85). The lowest efficacy was evident in the ability to formulate clear teaching goals (3.77), adapt teaching methods to students' characteristics (3.62), and integrate advanced information technologies into instruction (3.46) (Table 3).

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for teaching capabilities during the clinical experience.

	M	*SD*
Effective lesson planning	4.00	.81
Clear presentation of course material	4.00	.71
Constructing diverse learning experiences	3.92	.76
Formulating clear teaching goals	3.77	.93
Fostering intrinsic schoolchildren's motivation to learn	4.00	.71
Adapting teaching methods to students' characteristics	3.62	.77
Selecting assessment methods and tools	3.85	.69
Integrating advanced information technologies into instruction	3.46	1.05
Reflecting on their teaching	3.92	.95
Utilizing student feedback to enhance instruction	3.85	.99
Learning from others to enhance teaching	4.08	.76
Total	3.86	.83

α = .93

Interpersonal communication proficiency (α = 0.93)

Respondents demonstrated a high level of self-efficacy in interpersonal communication across all areas assessed. These included treating schoolchildren respectfully (4.85), fostering students' self-confidence (4.54), creating a conducive learning atmosphere (4.38), assisting schoolchildren with emotional challenges (4.31), helping pupils with behavioral difficulties (4.00), collaborating within a learning team to enhance professional and personal growth (4.31), supporting students with learning difficulties (4.23), and establishing positive parent connections for the child's benefit (4.15) (Table 4).

Table 4. Means and standard deviations for interpersonal communication ability measures.

	M	SD
Treating schoolchildren respectfully	4.85	.37
Creating a conducive learning atmosphere	4.38	.77
Fostering students' self-confidence	4.54	.66
Assisting schoolchildren with emotional challenges	4.31	.75
Supporting students with learning difficulties	4.23	.72
Helping pupils with behavioral difficulties	4.00	.91
Establishing positive parent connections for the child's benefit	4.15	.69
Collaborating within a learning team to enhance professional and personal growth	4.31	.85
Total	4.34	.72

α = .93

Level of professional identity (α = 0.63)

The respondents exhibited clear perspectives on the essence of effective teaching (4.31), a distinct understanding of the role of an ideal teacher (4.15), and a strong sense of educational mission (4.08) – all at a high level. Moderately, they held clear views on the influence of diversity on the learning process and took substantial pride in their role as educators (3.77) (Table 5).

Table 5. Means and standard deviations for the measures of faith and professional identity.

	M	SD
Clear perspectives on the essence of effective teaching	4.31	.63
Distinct understanding of the role of an ideal teacher	4.15	.69
Clear views on the influence of diversity on the learning process	3.77	.72
Strong sense of educational mission	4.08	.64
Substantial pride in their role as educators	3.77	1.09
Total	4.01	.75

α = .63

In summary, the research findings regarding the respondents' self-efficacy, attitudes towards teaching, and professional identity revealed that the primary factors influencing the choice of a teaching career were personal interest and compatibility with their abilities, followed by employment and remuneration considerations. The pursuit of career growth and gaining a general education had a moderate impact on this decision, while social-ethical considerations and a sense of mission played a less significant role. Additionally, respondents had a moderate perception of their prospects for becoming teachers after graduation.

As reported by the participants, the field experience led to a substantial increase in knowledge, particularly in their subject area, general teaching methods, and understanding of social dynamics in the classroom.

However, respondents reported lower efficacy when it came to applying teaching methods specific to their specialization and familiarity with the curricula in their area of expertise.

The findings also highlighted that respondents felt confident in engaging students in the learning process to enhance their abilities. On the other hand, they felt less effective in adapting teaching to individual student needs, cultivating behavior norms, and setting classroom boundaries.

Furthermore, respondents demonstrated a high level of efficacy and skill in various teaching aspects, including their ability to enhance students' motivation, improve teaching techniques, effectively plan lessons and deliver clear explanations.

However, respondents reported challenges in creating

diverse and enriching learning experiences, critically reflecting on their teaching, selecting appropriate assessment methods, and utilizing student feedback for instructional improvement. The lowest levels of efficacy were associated with formulating clear teaching goals, tailoring instruction to student characteristics, and integrating advanced technology into teaching practices.

Finally, the findings show that respondents possess a level of self-efficacy and interpersonal communication skills across all evaluated areas: treating students respectfully, instilling confidence in students' abilities, creating an environment conducive to learning, assisting students with emotional challenges, collaborating within a learning team to foster personal and professional growth, helping students with learning obstacles, and establishing positive connections with parents for the betterment of the child.

The fifth research question explored respondents' perceptions of their practical experiences at school: activity frequency, mastery of covered content and skills, frequency of observations and feedback, as well as involvement in various school activities.

Frequency of feedback sources

Respondents most commonly received feedback from their teacher-mentor at school (4.65). Feedback during the field experience was less frequent from the pedagogic instructor at the university (3.35), schoolchildren (3.12), teachers and other professionals at the school (2.71), and least frequently from peers (2.35) (Table 6).

Table 6. Means and standard deviations for the amount of feedback from different sources.

	M	*SD*
Feedback the pedagogic instructor at the university	3.35	1.62
Feedback from their teacher-mentor at school	4.65	1.49
Feedback from peers	2.35	1.58
Feedback from teachers and other professionals at the school	2.71	1.72
Feedback from the schoolchildren	3.12	1.73

The respondents were also asked about their familiarity with the evaluation criteria used for their teaching practice at school and the choice of the school where they completed their teaching practice. Approximately 52.9% of respondents indicated being familiar with the evaluation criteria used for their practical work and their corresponding teaching practice grade. Of these, 41.2% were evaluated based on how the lesson was given,

35.3% under other criteria, and 11.8% by lesson plans or attendance. A majority (64.7%) reported finding their teaching practice school, while only 35.3% were placed in a school following consultations and recommendations by a pedagogic instructor from the university. Furthermore, respondents were asked to describe the frequency of their involvement in school activities. The results of their responses are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. The frequency of the respondent's participation in school activities.

From never = 1 to in all lessons = 5	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	In about half of the teaching practice days (%)	In most of the teaching practice days (%)	In all the teaching practice days (%)	Mean	SD
I participated in teacher meetings	58.80	23.50	11.80	-	5.90	1.71	1.1
I participated in parent-teacher meetings	82.40	5.90	5.90	-	5.90	1.41	1.06
I worked with parents	70.60	23.50	-	-	-	1.25	0.45
I participated in school activities such as plays/trips	41.20	41.20	11.80	-	5.90	1.88	1.05
I met with other teachers at the school in work matters	41.20	41.20	-	11.80	5.90	2	1.22
I met with other teachers at the school in a social setting	52.90	29.40	-	11.80	5.90	1.88	1.27
I conducted action research in class or submitted an observation report	17.60	41.20	11.80	5.90	23.50	2.76	1.48

As seen from Table 7, the respondents reported engaging in various school activities, including teacher meetings, parent-teacher meetings, social events, and participation in action research, at a very low frequency.

Additionally, the respondents were queried about their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of various elements.

Level of satisfaction with the following elements

The highest level of satisfaction was reported in relation to the performance of the teacher mentor (4.35), followed by a slightly lower satisfaction level with the pedagogic instructor (4.12). A moderate level of satisfaction was indicated for the school (3.65), the teachers (3.41), and the institution principal (3.13). The respondents also provided information about the frequency of activities they engaged in during their teaching practice at school. The data from their responses is presented in Table 8.

Furthermore, it was determined that all activities, including giving full or partial lessons to student groups or individuals, either as a single teacher or part of a teacher group, were carried out infrequently, with less than half of the practical training sessions involving such activities, often only occurring in a few lessons. The mastery of content and various skills was rated as moderate. The highest frequency of feedback provision and lesson observation was attributed to the teacher mentor. In contrast, feedback from other teachers, the pedagogic instructor, schoolchildren, and peers was reported to be infrequent by the respondents.

The majority of respondents conducting their teaching practice in high schools did not have fellow peers from their course at the same school. Approximately 40% of them were present at the school for their teaching practice once a week, while the remaining individuals attended two to four times a week. Most of them (64.6%) engaged in three to five lessons during each teaching practice day. About half of the respondents mentioned having additional sessions with the instructor throughout the year, in addition to the weekly teaching practice days.

The respondents also reported to what extent they had acquired experience and skills during the teaching practice.

Table 8. The frequency of the following activities during the teaching practice.

From never=1 to in all lessons=5	In no or few lessons (%)	In less than half the lessons (%)	In about half the lessons (%)	In most of the lessons (%)	In all the lessons (%)	Mean	SD
I taught the whole class a full lesson	41.20	41.20	5.90	-	11.80	2	1.27
A taught the whole class parts of a lesson	52.90	35.30	-	5.90	5.90	1.76	1.15
I taught a group of students	41.20	47.10	-	5.90	5.90	1.88	1.11
I taught students individually	64.70	23.50	5.90	-	-	1.38	0.62
I taught in a team with other teachers (co-teaching)	88.20	11.80	-	-	-	1.12	0.33

The extent to which experience and skills had been acquired during the teaching practice

The respondents were found to report a better command of teaching skills (3.88) and of experience in their field of specialty (3.65) and fewer management skills (3.53) and other relevant experience (3.35) (Table 9).

The findings indicated that the majority of lessons conducted by the respondents were observed by their teacher mentors, resulting in feedback provided by both the teacher mentor and their peers. The respondents also noted that they had observed a significant number of lessons taught by their teacher mentors. However, the pedagogic instructor's observations were moderate, covering only half of the lessons delivered by the respondents.

The respondents were asked about the location and timing of the feedback they received. Approximately 64.7% reported receiving feedback solely at the school, while the remainder stated that feedback was given both at the school and the university. Additionally, 76.5% of respondents noted that feedback was provided on the same day as the lesson, with the remaining respondents indicating varying times during the week or subsequently. The respondents also discussed the skills they had acquired through their teaching practice experience at the school.

Analysis of the findings reveals that the teaching practice at school significantly facilitated various dimensions of students' skills development.
Substantial facilitation was observed in the following areas: experiencing lesson planning (4.41), engaging in actual teaching and gaining familiarity with personal teaching abilities (4.41), understanding classroom realities (4.41), acquiring the skill to plan individual lessons (4.41), mastering teaching skills like effective questioning (4.29), and bridging the gap between theory and practice (4.29).

A moderate level of facilitation was noted in: acquiring classroom management skills (4.18), cultivating independent decision-making during teaching (4.18),

experiencing lesson planning (4.12), becoming acquainted with students, their capacities, and limitations (4.06), acquiring teaching skills in managing discussions (4.00), gaining familiarity with curriculum frameworks (4.06), and acquiring teaching skills in providing feedback (4.00).

A minor degree of facilitation was evident in: understanding one's role as a teacher and constructing a professional identity (3.82), building self-confidence (3.82), becoming familiar with school dynamics (3.71), acquiring the capacity to design instructional units (3.59), and lastly, fostering collaboration with colleagues (3.18). Furthermore, a substantial portion of respondents reported feeling prepared for teaching as a result of the guidance provided during the practical training (41.2% yes, 41.2%

partially, 17.65% no). Lastly, participants were inquired about the extent to which the topics covered in university courses were connected to their experiences during the teaching practice.

The link between what was taught in various university courses and experiences in the teaching practice was investigated. The respondents perceived a strong connection between content from teaching and didactics courses (3.82), courses in the field of specialty (3.41), and evaluation methods courses (3.29). A moderate connection was observed for psychology courses (3.00), while a weaker connection was noted for philosophy and educational theory courses (2.53) and sociology courses (2.41).

Table 9. Frequency of observations and feedback given during the teaching practice.

From Never = 1 to In all lessons = 5	In no or few lessons (%)	In less than half the lessons (%)	In about half the lessons (%)	In most of the lessons (%)	In all the lessons (%)	Mean	SD
I observed lessons given by the teacher mentor	-	11.80	5.90	52.90	29.40	4	0.93
I observed lessons given by other teachers at the school or in other schools	41.20	41.20	11.80	5.90	-	1.82	0.88
I observed lessons given by my peers	64.70	29.40	-	5.90	-	1.47	0.8
The pedagogic instructor from the university observed my lessons	47.10	17.60	11.80	5.90	17.60	2.29	1.57
The teacher mentor observed my lessons	-	17.60	-	11.60	70.60	4.35	1.17
My peers observed my lessons	64.70	11.80	5.90	-	17.60	1.94	1.56
The pedagogic instructor from the university gave feedback on the lesson	58.80	5.90	-	-	29.40	2.31	1.89
The teacher mentor gave feedback on the lesson	5.90	11.80	-	5.90	76.50	4.35	1.32
My peers gave feedback on the lesson	58.80	17.60	-	11.80	5.90	1.81	1.33

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study offers a comprehensive exploration of Israel's teacher education programs spanning 20 years, along with the introduction and implementation of a new program. Through a case study at an Israeli university, the research investigates how the program changes are perceived by participants and how these changes contribute to their training.

Main research findings

Change in teacher education program

The study's initial focus was on the transformation of the teacher education program, as revealed through the case study. The research indicates that the new training model is holistic, integrating academic education with field experiences in schools. Faculty, pedagogic instructors,

teacher mentors, and academic students from both the university and schools play active roles. The introduction of the new program led to shifts in teaching and learning paradigms, including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the transition to e-learning, and the challenges posed by teacher attrition.

Freedom in Program Implementation: a new program allows teacher education institutions freedom of action, as it does, in particular, regarding the university that constitutes the case study. Hence, the university focused primarily on changes in the new structure for an intensified field experience at the schools, including teaching workshops in e-teaching. Notably, the program was implemented towards the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, which accelerated the remote use of digital tools, but the students and teachers longed to return to the schools, to personal connections and contact with their friends. Thus, the field experience in the schools doubled in scope and now encompasses some 12 hours on two days a week with the spirit of the times. Furthermore, most university students study a full Baccalaureate program throughout the year, which makes it hard to fit in two days a week at a school in a way that is compatible with their curriculum. All this must be combined with the teacher's schedule at the school in the specific field of specialty. The case study showed that 78% of the respondents work for a living, such that opting for a track of studying towards a teacher diploma, one that includes two days of teaching practice a week, makes it hard for them to work in addition to studying for a Bachelor's degree.

Motivations for choosing teaching

The study addressed respondents' motivations for pursuing a teaching career and evaluating their job prospects. The findings reveal that the primary driving factors are personal interest and alignment with capabilities, followed by employment and salary considerations. Career growth and gaining a general education moderately influence this choice, whereas social-ethical concerns and a sense of mission have limited influence. Respondents hold a moderate view of their prospects as teachers after graduation.

Perception of teaching abilities

Respondents' perceived ability to manage teaching and learning was examined across dimensions. Notably, they reported acquiring significant knowledge during field experiences in their disciplinary and teaching methods domains. Proficiency was relatively lower in specialized teaching methods and familiarity with related study programs. Notable findings include:

Class management: Respondents displayed high self-

efficacy in areas such as involving students in learning, constituting role models, and enhancing personal abilities. However, they recognized limitations in addressing individual, group, and systemic needs, cultivating behavior norms, and establishing boundaries in class.

Teaching skills: Respondents demonstrated high efficacy in learning from others, lesson planning, clear content presentation, and fostering student motivation. They reported lower efficacy in diverse teaching approaches, reflective practice, student evaluation, setting clear goals, adapting teaching to student characteristics, and integrating advanced technologies.

Interpersonal communication: Respondents excelled in interpersonal communication abilities, including treating students respectfully, fostering self-confidence, creating conducive learning environments, addressing emotional difficulties, collaborating within learning teams, aiding students with learning challenges, and building parent connections.

Professional identity and beliefs: Respondents exhibited strong alignment with effective teaching practices, the role of an ideal teacher, and a sense of mission as educators. Moderate alignment was observed in recognizing the impact of diversity on learning and pride in being a teacher.

In summary, the study revealed that interpersonal communication skills were most significantly developed during the teaching practice, followed by professional identity, teaching and class management skills, and subject knowledge. This pioneering research sheds light on the field experience/ teaching practice within a new teacher education program. It highlights the link between academic theory and teaching practice experiences and calls for further adaptation of course content and strategies for improved integration. By granting autonomy and relevance to training institutions, the program seeks to inspire young individuals to choose the teaching profession, emphasizing its societal appreciation and suitable rewards.

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