

TEACHER TRAINING IN ISRAEL

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All teacher training colleges in Israel operate under the supervision and budgeting of the Education Ministry, and responsibility for academic content in these institutions is entrusted to the Council for Higher Education. In the 2009-10 academic year, 25,264 students – including all years of the programs – studied at 23 teacher training colleges (in tracks designated for public school, religious public school, and Arab education). In the colleges, two programs are run: a program for studies toward a B.Ed. and a teaching certificate, and a program to train students for teaching who already possess an academic degree.

The teacher training programs in Israel operate in two separate frameworks in respect to statutory supervision and the requirements necessary in them for receipt of a teaching license: one segment is found in the education colleges, most of which meet academic standards, while the other segment is found in the framework of the teaching certificate programs, which are part of the activities of the schools for education in the universities. The two systems differ in the duration of studies and in the structure of the curriculum, but both impart to the students the message that teacher training is based mainly on knowledge of a technological-practical nature and less on other elements of knowledge whose source is more in conceptual and academic disciplines representing a vital infrastructure for processes of professional socialization.

The academic colleges for education operate according to the “guiding model” for a B.Ed. track formulated at the beginning of the 1980s by the committee headed by Prof. Dan. This model has undergone over the years some cosmetic changes (changes in content emphasis, additional subjects, and a reduction of hours) but not fundamental ones, and it still dictates the main character of teacher training.

The “guiding model” in Israel sees teaching as requiring professional coaching, and not as just another discipline that can be studied at university as any other. In Israel there is criticism of the central curricula. The local literature describes many doubts and much dissatisfaction from teacher training processes, and some of this criticism even proposes practical proposals for change that are in line with many of the recommendations found in research and evaluation reports authored in other countries [5]. The “Dovrat Report” [6] summarizes the criticism of teacher training in Israel by formulating a series of recommendations for changing training and professional development processes for teachers. One can also observe in many teacher training institutions local, specific, programs whose purpose is to address problems in training, mainly in respect to tightening the bond between pedagogical training and the authentic teaching reality. The developing approach is one of combining “education” with “coaching”, and the perception of teaching as a reflective occupation, in which the theories are brought closer to the act of teaching. Also in Israel the

track intended for teacher training of degree holders is growing (retraining degree-holders for teaching”), and the percentage of applicants has increased over the years.

Alternative Teacher Training Courses in Israel

The most common mold for us consists of “teacher in-service courses” of various types, and there have also been some new things added in recent years, such as “teacher centers” and “Pisgah centers” (centers for development of education faculty), which are intended to reorganize (in a more efficient manner) resources allocated to the issue. In the current mold, individual teachers from different schools in a more or less broad geographical region come together to one location, study in in-service courses that are not connected with each other, and which comprise no clear plan, and when they return to their schools they find it difficult to implement what they have been taught as individuals in a conservative and alienating environment. Slightly prior to the teacher centers, and overlapping with them, “schools for professional development” began to develop in Israel, which fundamentally are partnerships between an academic teacher training institution and schools. Additional innovative attempts in Israel are connected with the implementation of action research in the school with the teaching faculty, mostly through the leadership and support of faculty members from teacher training institutions. Also here, even though the experiment is in its initial phases, anyone who knows it up close tends to recommend its continued development and implementation.

“In-service training” today, according to a document of the Administration for Training and Development of Education Workers (Education Ministry website), “is not organized and a result of an overall vision,” but rather represents organizational frameworks whose flagships currently are the Pisgah centers (centers for development of education faculty). “In-service courses” is the key concept, and the object is “to provide support, instruction, and assistance to education workers in their academic and professional advancement. In the 2002-3 school year, it was decided at the Education Ministry to pool all the resources designated for in-service courses and to establish the Pisgah centers. In 2004-5, 58 such centers operated throughout Israel (Education Ministry website). Their declared goal is to develop an array of in-service courses that will accompany the teachers, improve their professional knowledge, develop their capabilities – and thus improve the quality of teaching in the classroom and student achievement. Although it is declared that “the various frameworks for development of education faculty must be dynamic and flexible, combining in-school support with support from outside the school...”, one can observe the excessive weight of the section “In-service Courses” in defining their fields of activity (section A), together with the regional-level and national activities (section C). In contrast, description of the activity at the centers is marked by a total absence of school-based activity expressed in the additional sections in the document. In other words, the important insights regarding the nature of teaching and of the

teacher's professional knowledge, which appear as the rationale for the Pisgah centers, have not been translated at this stage into activities that stray beyond the bounds of the familiar and traditional in-service courses.

Zuzovsky [8] proposed a somewhat different typology of professional development in Israel: the classic model (studies in institutions of higher education), the school model (with an emphasis on reflection and school focus), and the individualistic model (which differs from the classic model only in the source of support: teachers unions instead of local authorities or the teacher training institutions themselves). This proposal does not deal with many of the issues raised in this chapter or our study. Harpaz [4] claims that two educational models have disappointed – the “curriculum at the center” model (also called the requirement model), and the “child at the center” model (also called the support model). He proposes a new model, based on the idea of communities of learners/researchers/thinkers. Tadmor [7] sees in education an existential experience, and Beck [3] critiques thoroughly and methodically the standard “technical-rational” teacher training, and proposes an alternative based on the mode of existence of “being”. Aloni [1] calls “to bring back spirit and culture to education”; Aviram [2] strives for a similar goal: “If we successfully realize an educational program that will enable contemporary young people to deal in a systematic way with the question of the meaning of their lives, we will certainly be implementing a meaningful educational process” [2, p.113].

After the survey and discussion of traditional and alternative teacher training, below we will deal with a current approach built upon the various approaches, and designed out of a perspective on what has been researched and done up to this point.

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