



Perception of the accomplished teacher among teacher educators in “research oriented” and “teaching oriented” institutes in Israel



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived components of effective teachers among teacher educators in research and teaching-oriented institutes in Israel.

The currently prevailing notion of the effective teacher, reflecting the complexity of teaching, can be traced back in the attitudes of teacher educators in both institutes; and as such it can contribute to the ongoing debate regarding what makes a good teacher and the standards that can be used for teacher evaluation. Furthermore, the study's results can indicate some advantages and drawbacks of teacher education in the different institutes – thus adding valuable findings to questions regarding the desirable location of teacher education that can also be used for the evaluation of teacher education institutes.

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Introduction

Teacher education takes place both in research-oriented and in teaching-oriented institutes. In the United States, institutes of higher education include both research universities and professional colleges, the latter including teacher colleges (Feiman-Nemser, 1990). This distinction, however, may be misleading because some colleges, such as Boston College, are research institutes while some research institutes are more professionally oriented. In Israel there is a clear separation between universities and teachers colleges. Teacher colleges are teaching-oriented institutes that prepare for teaching in primary education while universities are research-oriented institutes that focus on preparing for teaching secondary education. Moreover, while in teacher colleges training is “simultaneous”, that is to say, students study four years for a Bachelor's degree (B.Ed.) and a teaching certificate, the universities use a “continuous” model, where students first get their BA at the faculty of the relevant discipline and then take one or two more years at the School of Education in order to get a teaching certificate.

Research-oriented institutes in Israel (the universities) generally enjoy higher academic status because they are seen as emphasizing academic knowledge, generating new knowledge, research and criticism. Staff members are mainly male, with advanced degrees

and high institutional status, and while most teach in their relevant discipline, their main focus is on research. Teaching institutes in Israel (colleges in general and teacher colleges in particular), by contrast, have relatively lower academic status, and are identified as pedagogical-professional in nature with a focus on practice, learning, interpersonal relations and collaboration. Staff members are mixed male and female, with M.A., M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees; most of them teach pedagogy and education classes and specialize in teaching rather than research (Levy-Feldman, 2008; Niederland, Hoffman, & Dror, 2007). Within the research institutes, schools of education have relatively low status. Most of the staff members, having obtained their academic knowledge at the discipline faculties, teach related issues such as educational psychology and educational sociology. Thus, they mainly engage with their particular discipline (Altbach & Lewis, 1996; Chen, Gottlieb, & Yakir, 1996; Goodlad, 1990, 2002; Labaree, 2008; Levy-Feldman, 2004, 2008; Nevo, 1999).

The purpose of the study was to examine teacher educators' perceptions of core components of accomplished teachers, as they appear in the professional literature. It looks at these perceptions among teacher educators from “research-oriented” and “teaching-oriented” institutes in the Israeli context: universities and colleges. We also looked at differences in held perceptions between university-based schools of education and other faculties in the universities. Unlike other studies of teacher education, this study examines all the parties involved in teacher education at the research institute: at schools of education, where teachers obtain their pedagogical education, and at disciplinary faculties, where the teachers get their subject matter training.

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Theoretical background

Some of the main educational topics discussed by education philosophers since antiquity (Aristotle, Plato and others) have been the goal of education, the role of school and the teacher, as well as the image of the “accomplished teacher” and teacher education. Educational philosophies were segmented in numerous ways. One common way suggested by Dewey, 1959 compares the progressive movement in education, also known as the “new education” emphasizing the individual, to earlier movements, known as the “old education” which emphasize curriculum. Strain, 1971 offered three major segments termed progressive education, essentialism education and humanistic education. Lamm (2000, 2002) proposed three segments as well, but they were based on what education serves: socialization (education-serving society), acculturation (education-serving culture) and individualization (education-serving individual). Fenstermacher and Soltis, 1986 proposed another way of segmenting educational philosophies: the executive approach centered on products, the therapeutic approach centered on individual needs and fulfillment, and the liberating or emancipating approach targeted at intensifying the individual beyond socially atrophied patterns. Another common way looks at the focus of teaching: teacher-centered or student-centered focused approaches (Weimer, 2013).

Each philosophy’s approach has a different paradigm or model of teaching and teacher education and as a result stresses different components of the “accomplished teacher”. Furthermore, there is evidence in literature that some of the philosophies can be identified with either research or teaching institutes. As will be elaborated further, some of the “traditional” philosophies such as the “old education” (Dewey), or the socialization and acculturation approaches (Lamm), or the executive approach (Fenstermacher & Soltis), emphasizes the competency-based teacher education paradigm which stress the teacher’s subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills specific to the subject matter, and general pedagogical skills such as class management and the monitoring of learning. On the other side, some of the “modern” philosophies such as the “new education” (Dewey), the individualization (Lamm), or therapeutic and even liberating approaches (Fenstermacher & Soltis), emphasizes the humanistic based teacher education paradigm, stresses personal growth of both teachers and students and as such ascribes teachers’ commitment to the students and their learning, teachers’ professional development and the ability to critically examine their practice and involvement in the learning community.

One of the main “traditional” philosophies is the *traditional cultural philosophy*, which regards education as a process of acculturation. This philosophy considers education as part of the humanities and has been identified with the educational approach of research-oriented institutes (Darling-Hammond, 1987, 1997; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Lammert & Loewenberg-Ball, 1999; Loewenberg-Ball & Cohen, 1999; Shulman, 1987; Wenglinsky, 2000; Zeichner, 1994). In this process, the teacher is “knowledgeable” (Zeichner, 1994), so that teacher training emphasizes the teacher’s subject matter knowledge and the pedagogical skills specific to the subject matter (Darling-Hammond, 1987; Zeichner, 1994).

The second common “traditional” philosophy is the *traditional social philosophy*, which regards education as a tool in the service of socialization. Fenstermacher and Soltis (1986) describe this approach as “the executive approach”. The good teacher is an “effective teacher” (Cochran-Smith, 2004) whose main goal is to transmit knowledge. Teacher training emphasizes teaching theories and techniques and promotes teachers’ general pedagogical skills such as class management and the monitoring of learning (Cochran-Smith, 2004). This philosophy has been identified with

the educational approach of teaching-oriented institutes (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Wenglinsky, 2000; Zeichner, 1994).

From the 1990s a “modern”, *student-centered philosophy* of education developed (Dewey, 1959; Fenstermacher & Soltis, 1986) wherein the goal of education is to create the optimal conditions for self-growth with no direct connection to cultural or social goals. The accomplished teacher is required to be committed to the full diversity of students and their learning. Such a teacher is called a “caring” teacher (Noddings, 1999), and his professional development fosters the ability to critically examine his own practice (reflection) as well as to cope with and adjust to ongoing changes. Hence derives Shulman’s (2005) notion of the “pedagogy of uncertainty”. To acquit himself of this, the accomplished teacher also must be involved in a learning community. Teacher training, in this model, addresses issues related to child development and highlights learning situations, teachers’ action research, reflection and team work (Berliner, 2000; Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2007; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Shulman, 1987). In recent years the teacher is also expected to be aware of and contribute to social justice both in the classroom and in the community, and to act for social change (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Freire, 1981; Zeichner, 1994, 2007).

The modern student-centered philosophy, in contrast with the traditional cultural and the traditional social philosophies, which sometimes are called teacher-centered philosophies, is not clearly identified in the literature with either research or teaching institutes. But when looking at what the literature describes as good teacher education – broad and authentic practice, teaching research, staff and institute support (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2013; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Goodlad, 1990) – it would seem that teaching institutes are more likely to train this teacher than research institutes (Levy-Feldman, 2008). In teaching institutes, especially in Israel, there is more cooperation between academia and the field through, for instance, professional development school (PDS) models, and this generates authentic practice and teaching research (Silberstein, Ben-Peretz, & Greenfield, 2006). Staff members in teaching institutes are involved both in research on teaching and on teacher education as opposed to their colleagues at research institutes whose main research topics are discipline related (Yogev & Yogev, 2005). Moreover, staff members at teaching institutes identify with teaching and teacher education and institutional support for teaching and teaching-related research is wider (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; Levy-Feldman, 2008; Nevo, 1999; Zeichner, 2007; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001).

It is important to stress that the contemporary debate in teacher education today goes beyond any district distribution. Educational researchers as well as national committees such as NBPTS and INTASC tend to include all the above components, that can be attribute to different educational philosophies, in their definition of the knowledge and skills of the accomplished teacher. Furthermore, each component expanded and has been suited to ongoing changes in education and as a result in the teacher’s role as it is seen today. Despite all this, in Israel there is still a clear separation between universities and teachers colleges that is based on traditional assumptions regarding the role of each institute and is a reflection of educational philosophies. Therefore, the dichotomy framework between “traditional” and “modern” components seems to reflect the local perception of teacher education in the Israeli context, but, as will be elaborated in the findings and in the discussion parts, it is not unequivocal any more.

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