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WHEN PSYCHODRAMA AND EDUCATION ARE INTERWINED IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A TEACHER

Shiran Pines Cohen (a), Alina Felicia Roman (b)*, Ella Sarel-Mahlev (c)

*Corresponding author

(a) Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, shiran.pines@gmail.com

(b) "Aurel Vlaicu" University, Arad, Romania, romanalinafelicia@yahoo.com

(c) Levinsky college of education, Tel-Aviv, Israel, ellasarel@gmail.com

Abstract

Special education pre-service teachers [hereinafter “PST”], learning in their 1st year at an Academic Education College in Israel and having their practical training in an inclusive school, attended the psychodrama-based intervention program designed for pupils and PST. The program established a space for experiential learning, introspection and conceptualization of processes associated with the consolidation of a professional identity in a state of inter-personal encounter. This paper presents initial findings from a study which aims to characterize the effects of the program on the consolidation of the PST’ professional identity, as seen through their eyes. Qualitative methodology was used in order to collect and analyse participants’ voices from semi-structured interviews and written journals of seven special education PST. The findings illustrate that the program, which implements psychodrama technique in a group, facilitates the development of self-discovery as well as establishment of inner roles and acquaintance with its dynamics. Data analysis described a six-stage process that serves initial processes of consolidating of professional identity during the training process. The insights derived from the study can be used for developing emotional aspects in the identity consolidation processes which the PST undergo at the initial stages of the training. These aspects can assist in the creation and development of both theoretical and practical knowledge in the training of teachers in the field of special education in Israel and around the world.

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1. Introduction

The initial process of becoming a special education teacher is filled with academic, emotional and behavioral tasks and needs regarding the new role establishment. Various researchers have found special education to be more demanding than general education (Brown et al., 2006), and require the PST to adapt to their chosen profession and to their role as students (Dziegielewski et al., 2004). This paper presents initial findings of a study exploring the effects of a psychodrama-based intervention program on the consolidation of professional identity of special education pre-service teachers (PSTs) learning in their 1st year of teacher training. The present program aims to establish a space of emotional-mental work, based on constructivist values. The model of the program is grounded in the psychodrama role theory conceived by Moreno (1946), and derives its sources from the working model of Naharin (1985). The model was developed by Pines-Cohen and Dr. Sarel-Mahlev, adapting the contents to the PSTs' curriculum and therapeutic work in an inclusive school. Within the framework of the program, the special education PSTs meet the emotional world of children in the work group, as well as their own emotional world. As part of this process, the PST creates and shares thoughts, feelings and phantasies of teachers' roles and figure. They reflected upon their past and current experiences while using techniques taken from the world of psychodrama. The starting point of the program and the study that accompanies it is that the consolidation of the individuals' identity transpires by interaction between personal psychological processes and external norms and social expectations as conceived by the self. Also, the dynamics of the individuals' inner role system and the ability to reflect on it, affects the consolidated identity. The space created aims to build a paradigm that is more person-centered, identifying the reciprocal relations between emotion and cognition, personal and professional, individuals and the environment, and their impact on the consolidation of the PSTs' professional identity.

2. Problem Statement

Britzman (1991) argues that learning to teach is not a matter of applying decontextualized skills or of a mirroring predetermine images. This is a process whereby one's past, present, and future are interwoven, in a dynamic tension, through the process of formation, change and consolidation of parts within the 'self'. The consolidation of professional identity is initiated as the training process begins. Due to its effect on the future learning and development (Fisherman, 2018) of the processes of establishment of teachers' knowledge and quality (Knowles, 1992), the inquiry and examination of the required needs are highly valuable already at this stage.

At the initial training stage, PST need to cope with intensive emotions deriving from the first encounter with the educational field (Pines-Cohen, 2020). They have to rapidly integrate many factors: theory and practice, past and present experiences, socio-cultural dynamics, in order to answer the urging question "Who am I as a professional?". Although the requirements at this stage are comprehensible, models designed to consolidate the professional identity of special education teachers, develop introspective processes, and creation of emotional spaces that give room to the life experience of teachers' 'self', are mostly not included in the training programs (Golan, 2018).

2.1. The process of professional identity consolidation

Professional identity is part of one's self-identity (Kozminsky & Kloir, 2012), and discussions of these two identities are intertwined. The concept 'identity' is associated first and foremost with the name of the developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst Erikson (1968), who discussed this term while linking it to the concept of the 'self' or 'I'. He emphasized the impact of society on people's development patterns and on the consolidation of their identity during their life. Self-identity is defined by means of the questions "Who am I?" or "What am I?". Persons answer these questions through a dynamic process in which they interpret themselves and examine their identification in a given context and at a certain moment (Beijaard, 1995; Beijaard et al., 2004).

The process of shaping one's self-identity transpires throughout the entire life circle (Erikson & Erikson, 1998). The perception of the 'self' originates in the mother's glance that mirrors to the baby its 'self' as an ideal double reflected by the mother's eyes. It nurtures the baby's fantasy that it and the mother are partners of one entity (Winnicott, 1995) Thus, at all life stages, in order to answer the question "Who am I?", the 'self' needs another person in order to define itself, identify the similar as well as distinguish itself and clarify its uniqueness. The approach of the 'self' psychology coined the term 'selfobject' that deals with significant others in the child's life, as they foster and nurture a sense of the 'self' and self-identity by reinforcement, admiration and approval. In his expansion of the 'selfobject' concept, Kohut maintained that not only young children, but also adults need the mirror reaction given to them by the 'selfobject', in order to develop part within themselves and grow. Hence, the very glance and reaction are meaningful narcissist resources that continue assisting in the consolidation of self-identity (Govrin, 2004). Thus, a group to which people belong nurtures their development. People belong simultaneously to several groups in which they play various roles that affect the shaping of their identity (Super, 1990). This identity is formed and maintained by means of negotiation which individuals conduct with their environment or by social roles internalized by the individuals (Mead, 1934).

2.2. Professional identity in teaching

The term 'professional identity' is defined as a relatively solid construct. This construct encompasses beliefs, values, motivation, and learning from the past, all of which are in the context of the role chosen by people (Ibarra, 1999). The intra-personal component relates to the way teachers view themselves as professionals. For example, attitudes towards the profession, teachers' sense of belonging to and identification with the profession, and feelings related to professional skills. The inter-personal component relates to the way teachers' environment – students, teachers, parents – perceives them (Day, 2017; Fisherman & Weiss, 2011; Flores & Day, 2006; Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

In addition to the inside-outside dialectics, we consider previous teaching experiences, training courses with a clear positive or negative meaning, and childhood memories associated with learning as essential factors that affect the shaping of pre-service teachers' professional identity (Knowles, 1992; Zembylas, 2003). According to the narrative approach, teachers' personal life occurrences in the past, experiences and life narrative conduct a dialog with teachers' professional life in the present (Kagan, 1992).

People's life narrative is filled with experiences and occurrences and, frequently, it feels like one sequence, when the nucleus of the self-identity holds this narrative. Nevertheless, the self-identity of teachers who try finding out "Who am I as a teacher?" depends on a certain time and place, on the population with whom the teachers work, meet or conduct a discourse, leading to the shaping of sub-identities. When consolidating their professional identity, people strive to form a configuration of identities of all the identity components and create a coherence in it (Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Schachter, 2005; Zembylas, 2003). The better compliance between the sub-identities, the better the balance. This balance leads to a harmonious professional-identity, in which teachers have positive feelings about their professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2004). Together with the wish for integration, pre-service teachers' promotion of their professional way will result in inner gaps associated with various identities and roles. This leads to conflicts, some overt and some covert, as an inseparable part of the development process. The better teachers conduct a constant and dynamic negotiation between the identity parts and between them and perceptions, expectations and assessments of individuals and of others, the more they can perceive the conflict as an essential opportunity for growing and achieving a coherent identity (Kozminsky & Kloir, 2012).

A combination of identity integration processes, collection of personal knowledge about teaching and development of teaching skills and methods, teachers' development of their reflective capabilities through meta-cognitive actions of examining their roles and clarification of their environment, will promote the consolidation of teachers' professional identity (Chong et al., 2011). Bullough (1997) suggests that novice teachers' perceptions and beliefs about learning processes and their 'self' as teachers, are significant details in the future professional development, constituting the basis for attributing a meaning to the role and making decisions. Hence, teachers' learning process should start being exploring the teaching 'self'.

2.3. Psychodrama and the personality and role theory

Psychodrama is an action method of psychotherapy based on dramatic activity, by means of which individuals present their world, wishes, personal and interpersonal conflicts, as well as ways of coping with them (Moreno, 1946). The model presented in this intervention program is based on the personality theory conceived by Moreno (1939), according to which the 'self' is comprised of a set of roles (Clayton, 1975). Furthermore, the presented model is underpinned by the working model of Naharin (1985). Roles are defined as "actual and tangible forms that the 'self' assumes at a given moment as a reaction to a given situation" (Moreno, 1946, p. 153), and "people are characterized by a range of roles that determine their behaviour" (pp. 354-355). Each role has a set of affects, constructs and actions typical of it. Through a gradual development of the 'self', connections and relations are established between the clusters, and their unification creates the 'self' (Clayton, 1975).

Moreno (1946) distinguished between three levels of relations with a role, representing a personal development and inner freedom that increasingly grows. The first is role-taking – taking of a finished, fully-established and does not enable individuals a deviation or freedom. This is an automatic learning of a role by imitation or use of a model. The second is role-playing, whereby there is a play of a familiar role but with a certain degree of freedom and adaptations to the 'self'. The third is role creating – creating a unique

role that is suitable to the individuals' personal abilities and competences, offering a high degree of inner freedom (Dayton, 1994; Moreno, 1946).

The model in this intervention program emphasizes the identification and comprehension of the roles that exist in the pre-service teachers, as well as the development of the contexts between them in the process of consolidating the PSTs' professional identity.

This paper focuses on the role reversal technique, according to which the participants are invited to 'enter the shoes' of the figures or the inner parts that participate in the scene. This technique allows getting acquainted with the work objects and understanding them, reconstructing a previous social system.

2.4. The intervention program

Based on the above-mentioned perceptions, this study aims to conceptualize processes associated with the consolidation of a professional identity in a state of inter-personal encounter, as well as with the meaning of social expectations and personal development processes. The program was conceived on the basis of the acknowledgement that in order to train PSTs for work with children learning in special education frameworks, PSTs should develop an ability to understand the meaning of children's behaviours and its effects on the PST'. This will enable the PSTs to cope with the emerging needs and provide an appropriate response to every child. In addition to deeply understanding the children's feelings and needs, the PSTs have to foster an awareness of the children's needs, as well as of their own feelings and behaviors, while comprehending the relations between and mutual effects of the PSTs and their environment. The model presented in the program is implemented in an inclusive school as part of a first year PSTs training process in a special education pathway at a key college of education in Israel. The model is co-conducted by a psychodrama therapist and a pedagogical tutor in an inquiry course of the PSTs.

The intervention program comprises two consecutive groups:

Psychodrama-based group: the work group, consisting of seven pupils and seven PSTs (respectively). In the group, each PST is assigned to a pupil during the group and acts in the position as a 'co-therapist'. The sessions take place according to the psychodramatic working model and consist of three parts: warmup, action and sharing (Dayton, 1994). Each session starts with a common physical or emotional warmup, designed to promote group processes, reduce anxiety, stimulate contacts in the group (Naharin, 1985), and prepare the group towards the core of the session, the action. In the central part, the children evoke contents and conflicts from their inner world by means of techniques from the world of theater and acting, and they are presented by shows in which both the children and the PSTs participate. At the end of the session, the participants describe their emotions and share their personal experience (Dayton, 1994).

Supervision group: following the psychodrama group, the PST attend a supervision group. This group aims to evoke and create insights about the psychodrama-based group and the process children undergo in it, as well as about the PSTs' process, behaviors and thoughts that underpin their roles in the past and their relation to the present. In the supervision group, the PSTs practice psychodramatic techniques, including the role reversal technique, in addition to narrational techniques which puts its focus on childhood memories. The supervision group allows the PSTs to experience a variety of roles, within a protected space, process past and present experiences and, thus, facilitate the consolidation of inner new and growing narratives. Bruner (2003) argues that by selectively recalling the past, individuals re-create

their 'self', adjusting themselves to meet the future they imagine or fear. The psychodramatic work with childhood memories refers in a subjective-metaphorical manner to the present, examining the PSTs' interpretation of various situations, connection to the sense of belonging and values, building thoughts and ideals about the consolidated professional identity.

Throughout the intervention program, the PSTs write a reflective diary that the group tutors read once a week and give a feedback.

This model views the consolidation of the professional identity as a process that involves reflective thinking and change in one's perceptions of inherent values and ideals. For that purpose, the PSTs require a space that enables them to undergo introspective processes and meanings in the context of the new professional role. The optimal way for undergoing this type of process is together with significant others and by means of the group interaction that leverages the individuals' abilities to experience and learn about themselves.

3. Research Questions

How does attendance in a psychodrama-based intervention program impact the consolidation of professional identity of special education PSTs?

4. Purpose of the Study

It is commonly understood our days that a learning and processing space with an emotional nature is a meaningful necessity in the development of special education PSTs (Golan, 2018). This study aims to investigate the effect of a psychodrama-based intervention program on the professional identity consolidation of special education PSTs in their first year of training. The insights obtained from the study can support the development of emotional aspects in the processes of professional identity consolidation which PSTs undergo as part of their training. Moreover, these processes may facilitate the establishment and development of both theoretical and practical knowledge in special education teacher training both in Israel and worldwide.

5. Research Methods

The data of this study were collected from semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with seven PSTs, from reflective diaries and researcher's diaries. The findings presented in this paper are initial. The approach described in this paper is constructive-qualitative (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The constructivist worldview advocates that reality is not an external objective fact, but rather a dynamic process, whereby people interpret their interaction with the world and with other subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to this choice, the research approach posits that reality is understood by attempting to formulate the described process of providing a subjective interpretation, while requesting the subjects to reflect upon their experience.

5.1. Content analysis

The content analysis included a division of topics that produced 'units of meaning' relating to their social context. The unit of analysis was the expression, sentence, or word that was connected with the research aims, research question and/or the studied issues. The first stage of the analysis was mapping, during which different statements were compared inductively in order to identify similarities and differences. Similar statements were grouped together in categories according to their content (Shkedi, 2011). Categorization was performed as an interpretation and conceptualization process.

6. Findings

The findings presented in this paper relate to the research question. A thematic analysis of the interviews gave rise to the theme on which I will focus in this paper.

6.1. The interpersonal and intrapersonal encounters as enhancers of the professional identity consolidation

A key theme arising from the findings describes a process whereby the PSTs meet the others – children, additional PSTs and the group tutors – in the working space. Out of this encounter and its processing, they develop insights about their professional identity and establish their inner roles. The data analysis resulted in a six-stage process related to the professional identity consolidation: a. The envisage stage; b. The positioning and deliberation stage; c. The part-of-the-whole stage; d. Addressing the self; e. The transformation between content and meaning stage; f. The reflection – past experiences stage; and g. The insight and role development stage.

a. The envisage stage

The data analysis illustrates that the identity consolidation process of the PSTs begins prior to the meeting with the children and glides into the initial stage of the group. At this initial stage, prior to the first meeting with the child, The PSTs engage in fantasies about the children they will meet in the group, the roles and meaning of the PSTs vis-à-vis the children, and the idyll revolving around the dyadic relationship. Data illustrates that as the psychodrama group starts, the PST suspend their own subjectivity and preoccupy themselves entirely with fulfilling the children's immediate needs. This stage seems to remind the 'initial maternal preoccupation' discussed by Winnicott (1956). In this process, during the first weeks after the birth (or towards it), the mother experiences the baby as an inseparable part of herself, engaging in the identification of the baby's needs before the baby feels them.

b. The positioning and deliberation stage

The data analysis indicates that at this initial stage the PSTs elucidate their position in the children group and in the supervision group. This stage is dedicated to clarifying the essence of the group, the ways of functioning in it, and initial elucidation of their professional identity. At this stage, the PSTs mention a confusion of feelings between the role of the co-therapist, of the tutee, and the PSTs' role. Wishes arise to

hold knowledge, to possess concrete instruments that will assist in the process of tutoring, as well as a need to define the group boundaries and objectives. The feelings described at this stage are associated with anxiety, lack of knowledge, lack of confidence and total dependence on the group conductors. The PSTs demonstrate splitting mechanisms of good and bad, idealization and devaluation, divergence of emotion and thought, primitive defenses of projective identification and acting out. They also describe they sense that the threat resides in the tutors who might see the lack of knowledge and success of the beginner PSTs. The findings illustrate symbiotic thinking processes, whereby the PSTs have difficulties to create a separation between themselves and the children. N' said, "I wanted so much that the girl with whom I worked will occupy the center of the stage during the activity, I tried encouraging her to take this place, I wanted it for her". This type of assertions is typical of this stage.

At this stage, the PSTs engage in role-playing and reconstruct/emulate familiar roles with known behaviors (teachers they had known, lecturers, group tutors) and elucidate them by a psychodramatic activity. Most of the PSTs find it difficult to indicate their inner roles and share their deliberation about the meaning of their roles vis-à-vis the children. The PSTs investigate and clarify the inner roles, describing the roles of "wants to help", "the tutor", "the success-oriented".

c. The part-of-the-whole stage

The findings at this stage attest that a sense of belonging to the group is being formed in the PSTs. At this stage it becomes evident that the PSTs develop an understanding of the co-therapist role and they engage in observation, collect information about the children in the work group and search for an appropriate and beneficent response for the children. The PSTs describe the processing and recruitment of insights about the children's needs, based on the children's overt and covert behavior. They collect contextual knowledge about the children and their behaviors. The development of an emotional language and a group language becomes obvious and a group atmosphere is developed, manifested by humor that is unique to each dyad and to each group as a whole. Vis-vis the deepening of the relationships in the group, power struggles are noted.

both overt and covert, vis-à-vis the tutors. Moreover, on the one hand, there are voices that glorify the psychodramatic techniques and process, and, on the other, others that eliminate them.

At this stage, the PSTs begin identifying inner roles. L' pointed out: "I understood the roles that had developed in me: 'the inclusive', 'the understanding', 'the nurturing', 'the setting boundaries', and so on. This allowed me to position myself differently vis-à-vis the children. In this space, the role of 'the learner' in me moved a bit to the side and I grew a part in me that had learned to provide an adult response for the child".

d. Addressing the self

At this stage there are evidences of a reflective process, whereby the PSTs succeed in deepening the introspection of the dynamics which transpires within their world, vis-à-vis occurrences in their environment. At this stage, they report of an inquiry, an increasingly growing understanding of the way the mental materials from the environment affect their inner world, their thoughts, feelings, including wishes, fears, angers and unfulfilled needs. The PSTs describe a willingness to learn about the personal

responsibility, touch the pain, guilt, suffering, dependence, weakness, loss and envy. At this stage there is negotiation between central roles in the professional identity that is coming into being, while using the role reversal technique. The findings showed that this central discourse facilitated an optimal understanding of a roles system, while listening to derived narratives and their link to the teacher role. “This girl made me cry many times during the session and I was unable to stop the tears... I did not understand why. At the supervision I realized that she reminded me of myself at this age... The role reversal with the child in me organized thoughts and feelings dealing with myself today, my new roles and position”.

This introspective process allowed the PSTs to start dealing with the inner conflicts between different roles related to their new professional identity: “A major conflict that arose in me was between the role of ‘the loving’ and the role of the ‘boundaries setting’. I felt I was failing to be both... In the psychodramatic work, the roles reversals and the dialogue with them made me understand that both of them are in me, can co-exist and do not eliminate each other”. During this process, a better understanding is developed regarding the contribution of a self-inquiry of the teacher-learner interaction. It became apparent that this stage assisted the PSTs to regulate their feelings and reactions, as well as to develop the role of ‘the accompanier PSTs’ and their positioning vis-à-vis the children.

e. Transformation between content and meaning stage

This stage is characterized by the PSTs’ growing ability to interpret overt and covert behaviors. At this stage, the PSTs point out a deeper comprehension of the ‘children’s language’. Now, the PSTs are aware and can interpret the observed behaviors of the children, their body language, as well as the covert contents presented in the group. There is a deeper understanding of needs and fine-tuning of a beneficent response to each child. The PSTs report about roles associated with the teaching profession that are created inside them. A freer use of psychodramatic techniques is being observed. The sense of belonging to the field of teaching was promoted and the PSTs indicated a connection to other educators and teachers. During the discourse, the PSTs mentioned values and positions related to the type of teacher they wanted to be and a more varied and richer range of possible reactions to a situation became apparent. The PSTs’ attitudes towards the way they deem right for adopting certain situations became clearer to every PST. At this stage, L said: “When the child wanted to get out of the group, I realized it was his way of saying, without words, I was offended by the words of my best friend in the group...’, I knew I had to use the close relationship established between us in order to make him feel safe and belong to me and to the entire group”.

f. The reflection stage

The reflection stage accompanies the entire process and culminates at this period of the group work, both in the psychodramatic work in the supervision group and in writing the accompanying diary. The findings illustrate that at this stage the PSTs develop an inquisitiveness regarding their professional behaviors and their relation to their life narrative. “I found out how parts of my childhood narrative, moments and figures affected the person I am today and the teacher I want to become in the future... During the roles reversal with past experiences I realized that my 4th grade literature teacher still lived in me and oriented me towards the path I feel suitable for me”. At this stage, the reflections written by the

PSTs are longer, and there is a greater freedom of self-inquiry both in the writing process and in the supervision group work.

The PSTs pointed out that the reflection contributed to their professional development and assisted them in finding a suitable reaction for each child. They developed an ability to better define shape and boundaries of the inner roles, distinguish between thoughts, feelings and senses typical of every role and their impact on the PSTs' behavior vis-à-vis the children.

g. The insight and role development stage

At this stage, the PSTs indicate a growing understanding the contribution of each group member to the consolidation of their inner roles, and to the clarification of the PSTs' unique contribution to the children. At this stage, the PSTs have deeper insights about their various roles and identity, as well as about the relation between the environment and the individuals. A described:

“At the beginning I felt I was not needed. The child with whom I worked did not need me. He seemed confident of himself, always came first to stage. I felt abandoned and alone. When I role reversed with him in the supervision group I suddenly realized that the sensations I felt were not mine, they had been transferred to me from the child and it was all his... he was the abandoned, he was the one alone... in spite of the great confidence he outwardly transmitted, I understood that inside he needed my presence next to him very much”.

At this stage, the PSTs achieved a sense of better compliance between the various roles, reduction of gaps between the inside and the outside, between fantasy and reality. They also felt more flexibility in the motion between one role to another. The findings illustrated that the ability to reverse roles with the others in the group enabled roles reversal with the PSTs' inner other. This expanded the range of roles and the dialog among themselves. Furthermore, it became apparent that the enhancement of the group process allowed the PSTs to find a greater freedom and spontaneity to embrace new roles:

“The tutors were a role model for me... At first, I felt that I was emulating the tutor. I was talking and reacting like her. Towards the end of the group, I felt I had acquired more knowledge about myself and about the group. I felt that I was still speaking a little bit like her, but in combination with several additional things of my own... Through the encounter I had with her I understood better what type of teacher I wanted to become”.

In the group, the PSTs had the opportunity to meet themselves through their influence on others and the picture the others created about the PSTs. This could promote a basic development of the ego (Foulkes, 1948). Hence, the PSTs pointed out the development of their awareness of the 'self', enabled by the others' reaction:

“Through the roles given to me in the theater scenes we performed in the psychodrama group I could understand what the others thought about me and how I was perceived by the group members. It helped me to better understand who I was, even if not always it was easy for me to accept it”.

With reference to the roles, the PSTs indicated roles that empowered them and others that evoked rejection and objection of the group members. Thus, in an attempt to achieve a whole and integrative

identity, the individuals within the relationship with their environment, are looking for others who are similar to them. They also identify and contain, at the same time, strange and different components, some of them oppressive in their surroundings (Winnicott, 1971). These two forces, identified by the PSTs, acted simultaneously and created an imminent dialectic experience, motivating a tension that assisted in the movement towards the integrative development of identity.

7. Conclusion

The intervention program presented in this paper uses psychodrama-based principles and pedagogies as an expansion of a reflective process. The model was created to assist in consolidating a professional identity through a system of inquiries of the PSTs' self and roles in relation with their surroundings. The data analysis resulted in a six-stage process relating to the PST's professional identity. First stage was the envisage stage in which the PST'S engage in fantasies about their future roles and meanings. As the psychodrama group started, the PST engaged in initial investigation of their existing and developing inner roles, as they were role-playing and reconstructing familiar roles with known behaviors. The role playing and role reversal technique allowed the PSTs to conduct an inner negotiation which assisted in development of relations between various roles and expanding the range of roles. As the PST deepened their introspection, gaps were evoked which led to inner conflicts that undermined the PST's mental harmony. The role reversal technique assisted in enhancing the awareness with roles that inhibited a change or growth, as well as promoting separation processes, and elucidating the role dynamics. The findings illustrate that PSTs' ability to be member of the groups leveraged emotional and mental occurrences that motivated them, increased knowledge acquisition and development of the PSTs' emotional language. This working model seemed to encourage integrative processes and facilitated consolidation of professional positions, a deeper sense of belonging and identification with the teaching profession, combined with enhanced orientation of the identity and future professional goals. These aspects can assist in the establishment, creation and development of both theoretical and practical knowledge in the training of teachers in the field of special education in Israel and around the world and should be further investigated.

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