

ERD 2019
Education, Reflection, Development, Seventh Edition
TRAINING PROGRAM FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS IN
ISRAEL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A SECOND
CAREER

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Abstract

A new program, developed at a college of education in Israel, seeking to train kindergarten teachers. Target population comprises kindergarten teaching assistants and auxiliary personnel, to provide them with an employment horizon and social mobility, by improving their social status through academic education, which in the past was difficult for them to access. The article presents this program and its uniqueness against traditional kindergarten teachers' training programs. While the latter are based on four years of academic study followed by full integration into work in the field, this program recognizes participants' practical experience in the field. It allows for the learning environment to be adapted to their lifestyle as family members and employees, to gain experience in guided practical work parallel to their studies throughout their training period, to apply their academic and pedagogic knowledge on a day-to-day basis, and to customize studies and empower students. This article presents the program in comparison to the concept of "On-The-Job" training (OJT), common in other occupations. Faced with a severe shortage of quality kindergarten teachers, education systems need to encourage kindergarten teaching assistants to work, learn and gain experience all at the same time, and help them cope with academic load. Change is needed in a field to attract more applicants and contribute to their sense of coherence, self-efficacy and future orientation. Program contribution will be studied in a PhD research.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Sense of Coherence, professional development, second career, on-the-job training.



1. Introduction

Australia, Israel, the United States, Britain and other countries in Europe face a recruitment crisis of educators, kindergarten teachers and schoolteachers. In fact, there is a crisis in personnel in which there is a lack of quality educators to replace the outgoing generation and establish innovative approaches to teaching that are appropriate for technological developments in the 21st century (Richardson & Watt, 2005). Both the lack of incoming manpower and the need to change teaching methods to align with 21st century needs are increasing in their urgency. In addition, lack of proper compensation for educators and their image in society do not attract young people to fulfil their mission in education and shaping future generations. In Australia and Israel, efforts have been made to recruit people from the business and other fields to join the teaching profession. In Israel, teacher training institutions opened courses for academic graduates, as well as unique programs for integrating high-tech professionals as teachers, but this has not solved the problem completely.

1.1. Early Childhood education situation

In early childhood education, the situation has remained the same and there is a steep decline in the number of applicants to early childhood training courses. There is a large shortage of professional women in early childhood education and educational systems often compromise on non-professional personnel to carry out their activities. Women who care for young children do not envision themselves entering full training programs that require them to study for four or five days a week. Most of these women need vocational training but also need to maintain their earning capacity and thus cannot give up their jobs. Considering this, training programs are required to understand the needs of these women and still provide them with a professional solution for development and training. This situation raises the need for new creative possibilities.

1.2. New kindergarten teachers training program

A new program, developed at a college of education in Israel, whose purpose is to train kindergarten teachers targeting a population of kindergarten teaching assistants and auxiliary personnel, to provide them with an employment horizon and social mobility, by improving their social status through academic education, which in the past was difficult for them to access. It is a unique program and does not follow traditional kindergarten teachers' training programs. While the latter are based on four years of academic study followed by full integration into work in the field, this program recognizes participants' practical experience in the field. It allows for the learning environment to be adapted to students' lifestyles as family members and employees, to gain experience in guided practical work parallel to their studies throughout their training period, to apply their academic and pedagogic knowledge on a day-to-day basis, and to customize studies and empower students.

The main purpose of this paper is to review traditional kindergarten teachers training programs and draw keynotes of the new kindergarten teachers training program by reviewing key concepts revealed on literature review chapter and discuss later on conclusion and discussion chapter the advantages and disadvantages of the new training program.

2. Literature Review

There are many studies about academic second career retraining focusing on preschool age teaching as well, but in the literary review conducted so far, no studies were found about students without an academic background choosing preschool teaching as a second career.

2.1. Key Concepts

Second Career - Second career describes a significant change in occupation (Helppie-McFall & Sonnega, 2017). In the employment world, the term is accepted as a professional change. Mainly professionals who change direction, whether from a sense of professional satiation, through choice of a profession that better suits candidates' talents to resignation and starting a new chapter in one's professional life. A core aspect of this concept refers to academic retraining. Academics who at the start of their career, chose a profession that suited their view of their futures, employment market needs or environmental influences on the personal choice find themselves at a junction where they seek a different academic discipline suiting a new perception of their future, market needs or a decision to choose a different career (Chambers, 2002; Haggard, Slostad, & Winterton, 2006; Novak & Knowles, 1992; Powers, 2002). This paper will rely on the original concept for kindergarten assistants or workers in the field of preschool education, who complete academic studies in the discipline, training as kindergarten teachers, who will be referred to as second career kindergarten teachers (SCKT).

On Job Training (OJT) - OJT (Jacobs, 2003) is a common concept in the current employment world, going through a process of professionalization and efficiency (van der Klink & Streumer, 2002), mainly in engineering and medical disciplines. The concept refers to most graduates who come to their new places of work without experience and start a process of specific training, in their workplace, at the same time as working. This practical study process allows workers to become professional in a short period of time in a specific area in which they will work, while being exposed to real cases with which they will cope in the future. This paper will adopt the term On Job Training but will adapt the scope to address kindergarten assistant or workers in the discipline of preschool education studying in their workplace, completing academic studies in the discipline, to train as kindergarten teachers, which will be called On Job Learning (OJL).

Unique training program for kindergarten assistants' teachers - A unique academic kindergarten teachers' training program for kindergarten assistants or workers in the discipline of preschool education, based on professional experience. The program, different to curricula and kindergarten training, is a practical program combining studies and working in students' current workplaces and combines the terms Second Career Kindergarten Teacher (SCKT) and On Job Learning (OJL). In this study the program will be called On Job Training Program (OJTP).

2.1. Training program around the world and in Israel

Many studies have demonstrated the contribution of daily interaction between teachers and children to improve their learning processes. These studies have presented improvement and development of training processes for academic teachers, based on this interaction and a growth in alternative programs qualified to do this (Fridman, 2010; Nemser & Ben-Peretz, 2017; Olson, 2000).

These findings establish the essential for adjusting training program to the altering needs of education systems and public education policies. One can conclude that quality education, professional and well trained personnel is necessary response to the of 21th century learners requirements (Crossley, 2009; Darling - Hammond, 2017).

2.2. Training programs in Israel

There are numerous teacher training programs in Israel. Traditional routes of 4 and 5- years duration including the M-Teach routes for those without academic education. In addition, alternative training programs for people with academic degrees retrained for a second career in teaching (Feigin et al., 2017).

2.2.1. Kindergarten training programs in Israel

There are two programs for kindergarten teachers. The traditional program to graduate with academic degree and teaching certificate for birth to six. This is a 4-year program intended for non-academic students and includes 4 weeks of practical work per year, during the first three years and an apprenticeship year in the fourth year. Additionally, there is an academic retraining (conversion) program, one or two years with same 4 weeks of practical work per year, differs between training institutions.

2.3. Training programs in United States of America

The 'No Child Left Behind' (NCLB) reform from the start of the current century, determined fundamental principles with regard to teacher training. To close gaps and response to educational needs, policy leaders must recruit quality professionals to teaching and train them accordingly, build a variety of training programs and bridge the gap in trainees' abilities to match the learning to the field. On the other hand, difficulties passing licensing tests have led to adaptations complicating the selection procedures and determining standards for improvement and professionalization in teaching (Darling - Hammond, 2017; Field et al., 2003).

There are two training programs in the U.S.A., traditional alongside an alternative program for academic conversion (Shperling, 2017). Most students undertake the traditional training program to become teachers. The number of teacher training institutions currently stands at almost 2,700, less than half of whom offer training programs with a graduate degree. The trend, established today, is more concentrated on training processes in the field. Most attention has passed to the field, to execution of practical teaching and thus to reduce the gap between theoretical teaching and necessary practical skills (Darling - Hammond, 2012; Shperling, 2017).

2.3.1. Kindergarten training programs in U.S.A

There are approximately one hundred programs in the U.S.A. for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in kindergarten teacher training (Shperling, 2017). These programs are spread over approximately 30 states. Existing data shows the quality of training programs and the absence of an appropriate response to needs in the field. The data reveals that training does not address the professional knowledge required to work with young children (birth to 3 years old), not enough training is provided on child development, its nature and course. The programs focused on teaching the sciences and mathematics and less on recognizing social and emotional skills required by young children (Putman, Moorer, & Walsh, 2016; Shperling, 2017) and not enough practical experience exposing students to the daily difficulties they would encounter as teachers.

2.4. Training programs in Finland

Finland is known for the quality of its education. Its success in the field of education starts with the quality of those applying to teach and cultural view of a highly valued professions (Sahlberg, 2015). In recent years teacher training programs have been adapted to changing educational needs. Research and educational personnel, students and teachers are involved in change processes, with a shared responsibility and commitment to the improvement and success of educational processes and encouraging research. Training programs last for 5 to 7 years and include advanced degrees. Training processes are spiral and based on theoretical knowledge, professionalism in the field and developing research in teaching. About a quarter of the training program is dedicated to practical experience, both in academia through skills training with colleagues and practical experience in the field.

2.4.1. Kindergarten training programs in Finland

Preschool teachers can hold undergraduate degrees alone (Ministry of Education and Culture Finland, 2017b; Shperling, 2017).

2.5. Training programs in Singapore

Singapore has carried out many reforms in recent years, to develop a quality workforce, to meet the needs of a global competitive market. These reforms have contributed much and in international comparative tests, Singapore hold the first place in student achievements in mathematics (Shperling, 2017; Tan, 2005). Change processes included departure from traditional teaching methods and adapting new ones to the technological revolution in a changing global world (Goodwin, 2012; Taylor, Low, Lim, & Hui, 2012) The training program merge 16 months study and 14 months practical experience.

2.5.1. Kindergarten training programs in Singapore

Most applicants for teacher training have undergraduate degrees. To teach preschool or elementary classes, there is a four-year training course for a teaching license and diploma from the Institute for Education and Teaching.

2.6. Training programs in England

Training in England is carried out in teacher training agencies and not institutes of higher education. The government supervises these agencies and focuses on practical and applied based training programs. There are three training programs, the first is based on training at schools where daily experience in teaching is taught. It lasts approximately one year and upon completion, a teaching license is issued. The second one is based on pedagogic training, acquired at an academic institution. It lasts up to two years, as part of undergraduate or graduate degree studies with a practical experience program of about 18 weeks for elementary classes and 24 weeks for secondary classes. The third is a training program for academics, experienced teachers or military personnel (Shperling, 2017). In recent years changes have been made to training programs and the emphasis placed on practical experience and abilities (Ross & Hutchings, 2003).

2.7. Training programs in Canada

Canada has experienced changes to teacher training programs as part of its great demand for teaching personnel versus recruitment challenges and dropping out of the profession. Each province has its own training program. Programs are targeted at undergraduates or those without any degree, some at university institutions and some in the community, mainly online. Training for a teaching certificate and undergraduate degree lasts about four years. Practical experience occurs in the fourth year (Shperling, 2017).

2.7.1. Kindergarten training programs in Canada

For kindergarten teachers, there is a graduate degree training program at the University of Toronto. Teaching staff come from the department of psychology, with an emphasis on child development and behavior, by analyzing observations and practical experiences in the area. The program has professionalization and research horizons, in topics linked to child development and education (University of Toronto OISE, 2017).

2.8. Training programs in The Netherlands

The Netherlands is undergoing significant demographic changes, directly affecting its education system and teacher training programs. As a result of high dropout levels and teacher retirement, there are initiatives to recruit personnel to teaching using incentives and alternative rapid teacher training programs for academics. Most programs last one to four years and practical experience is integrated into the program from the start (Hammerness, van Tartwijk, & Snoek, 2012).

2.8.1. Kindergarten training programs in The Netherlands

Acceptance conditions for this training program are not high. Candidates with basic education can be accepted to a four-year program carried out in universities.

2.9. Training programs in New Zealand

Education reform in New Zealand passed most responsibility to schools and teacher training institutions, creating a structural change in training institutions and changes to programs themselves.

Teaching licenses are received after continuous work, work assessment and participation in a mentoring program, supported by the state. Alongside these changes, applied programs of practical experience were building, integrated throughout training programs (Alcorn, 2014; Ell, 2011).

2.9.1. Kindergarten training programs in New Zealand

Various subjects are learned in these programs that last approximately a year. The programs are accompanied by at least 14 weeks practical training. In Auckland, there are kindergarten teachers training programs where a license is awarded after a number of credits are achieved, at every stage of training, including the practical program. Candidates have undergraduate, graduate or no academic degrees.

2.10. Alternative training program around the world and in Israel

Alternative programs for teacher training are aimed at those with an academic degree without formal knowledge in education and teaching (Berkovich & Shalev-Vigiser, 2010). Students in these programs are more mature, with acquaintance and experience in the labour market, but without acquaintance with the education discipline. Overall, these students receive short-term training at teacher training institutions and immediately after, integrate into school and kindergartens. These programs are based on training during practical work in the field.

These programs have multiplied in recent years as a respond to the demand for quality personnel to integrate into teaching and to the shortage in personnel (Kee, 2012). Such shortages sometimes come from reforms and systemic changes deriving from public policy. For example, in Israel, a number of weeks before the commencement of the formal educational year (September 1st) the Trachtenberg Report was approved, extending the Free Education Law to age 3 (previously was age 4) and all kindergartens for 3-4 year olds would be given an additional assistant, who would help absorb younger children into the supervised educational framework. Every kindergarten would have a manager-teacher and two assistants, who would support organizational and educational work. This reform created a need to integrate professional and available personnel immediately and accelerated student applications to alternative training programs.

How these training programs are defined differs between Israel and the world. These programs are not always state supervised. In the United States, programs are defined as alternative programs and as their name says are an alternative to traditional programs. In Israel, the tendency is to define them as unique programs. According to the Ministry of Education, responsible for training teaching personnel, there are no alternative programs, all meet ministry policy outlines and the difference is how curricula are distributed. In traditional programs, all academic studies and training take place before entering teaching whereas in the unique programs, training commences before and continues during work (Feigin et al., 2015).

As mentioned, alternative and special training programs in Israel and around the world refer primarily to students with undergraduate degrees. There are few special programs to train teachers/kindergarten teachers without academic degrees, with practical experience and knowledge accumulated through many years of work in education systems. These unique programs signify an interesting change in the field.

3. Research Method

A systematic review of the relevant literature was done.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

Trends in teacher training programs shows policies, in most countries, promoting academic training and academic progress routes, as part of overall training programs. These indicate high acceptance conditions, encouraging professionalism and research-based training, taking place, mainly in academic institutions (New Zealand, Finland and Canada).

There is a trend to transfer training to the field, in schools and designated institutions (England and U.S.A.).

There is comprehensive agreement that practical knowledge and experience are significant in training and must be widely integrated into programs. Teachers must learn how to teach – that is their meaningful and true learning. The more training programs are based on practical knowledge and experience, the gap between academic institutions and reality, in the field, will be closed.

In most programs, the practical are at the end of the training program, with the exception of a few programs that integrate experience throughout training programs (Canada and the Netherlands).

A unique training program for kindergarten teachers for assistants without an academic background

From the review of alternative teacher training programs in Israel and around the world, it emerged that they are intended for students with academic degrees and that there are no programs awarding an academic degree and teaching certificate to those with professional preschool age experience. In Israel, for assistants with many years' experience and basic education or kindergarten teachers in birth to three, yearning to progress personally and professionally, there are programs to train crèche managers, whose acceptance conditions and public administration requirements require them to have a professional certificate in the field. Today, in Israel, there is a unique program for educational workers enabling academic qualification in students' working place during their work. The program is based on a layout delineated by the Israeli Ministry of Education, lasts 4 years and combines academic studies at college alongside practical work in the field. The program is unique and suits the lifestyle of those applying to this route, in the sense of age and professional identity. The whole purpose of this program is to promote women in education and the research topic that examines the effect of studying on this program on future orientation of students, their self-efficacy ability and their self of coherence.

Conclusion

This literature review shows that early childhood development, at birth to 6, is the basis for normal development, mainly the interaction is of utmost importance. Still, there is a large gap in most of the training programs in the world for this important issue. The training programs generally address the older ages while early childhood practitioners, remain inadequate training. Only turning the pyramid upside

down, focusing the most attention on improving preschool educators' professionalism, through training programs that combine work and learning, will lead to this upheaval.

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