

Teachers in Multi-Cultural Societies: Excellence and Leadership

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Abstract. Fulfilling the most significant role in shaping their students' personalities, teachers must also regard themselves as social and political agents by playing a significant part in their activities, in addition to their academic achievement. This paper introduces several perspectives regarding the role of the teacher in a multicultural society, one who is involved not only in academic aspects, but also in complex socio-political environments, prompted to manifest his or her qualities as a commendable figure. It will also examine the special case study of training such teachers against the background of a multicultural existence with moral obligations in the State of Israel.

Keywords: Multi-cultural society; Excellence; Political-educators; Israeli Teachers

Introduction

Human history shows that unresolved tension has always existed between the necessity to preserve religious and cultural identities on the one hand, and the need to create contacts, dialogues and common partnerships with others, on the other. The age of technological developments which expedited global processes and theories about humanism, equal rights, and multiculturalism, is also a turning point for teachers and educational methods, particularly in those countries in which these changes evolved. It is obvious that demographic changes in Europe, the Middle-East and the United States, and social and cultural mobility over the last decades, have significantly exacerbated problems related to cultural diversity among both students and teachers. Educational systems and pedagogical theoreticians embarked on new research regarding multicultural policies and practices in teacher training colleges, and among experienced teachers in all schools. But this was not enough: a dramatic change was also necessary in thematic studies and textbook content in most subjects when race, color, and religious identities issues evolved constantly.

The last century, with its global development, progressivism, and high-technology communications, enabled unrestricted immigration, across countries and continents. The immediate results were difficulties of language, culture and behavior, in addition to political and social differences of opinion and systematic steps taken by the authorities and governmental ministers and

activists. They had to calibrate their state of mind and perform an inevitable switch in their basic attitude towards education and diverse and multicultural environments. The rise of multicultural education also coincided with several legislative and court actions in some countries particularly from the late sixties and the seventies. More and more laws in the US and in Western Europe, Scandinavia and in the State of Israel, inter alia, the Civil Rights Act and the Equal Educational Opportunity Act, were passed. This also highlighted the visibility of diverse bilingual students who inevitably developed double lives – with their families and communities to preserve their cultural identity, and with their new friends at school and their social-educational local and environmental activities. How did this affect the innovative process and prepare educators and teachers with regards to these facts and the genuine intention of paving new educational roads? This paper will introduce several ideas and dilemmas in the field of teachers and teacher trainees in relation to multicultural society, integrative methodologies, modern pedagogy, and the tasks of the leaders of education who serve as the main excellence role models and humanistic mentors.

Diversity and multiculturalism and their importance to beneficial teaching

The bond between teachers and leaders is historical; Plato mentioned this aspect when he adopted the Socratic pedagogy, understanding the common denominator which they share: the nature of truth (Plato, Republic, 454d -509d). In Plato's ideal state, rulers, as teachers, should seek the truth and become virtuous role models as educators, as they exemplify total interaction with self-knowledge and wisdom (González, 2013). Even if it may seem utopian in our multifaceted and dynamic reality, there is an acute need for teachers who will play the role of educational leaders in the spirit of Plato's Republic. Most modern countries are currently facing a crisis: (a) Teachers leave their profession a few years after they complete their studies and begin work, and encounter difficulties in teaching and handling heterogenous and multicultural classes. (b) Excellent students of education realize that their choice of profession was misguided, and that being a teacher at present also requires psychological, social and political skills, a challenge which is not suitable for all, and in addition is perhaps threatening. Numerous studies and dozens of headlines relate to this ongoing process: Every year approximately forty-five thousand teachers enter the profession, and about the same number leave (including retirement), and some eighty thousand teachers switch jobs within the state school system.

Europe, the Middle-East, Asia, Africa, and the US show a decline in the number of outstanding people who join the teaching profession. Furthermore, unfortunately the shortage of suitable students who choose to become teachers forces the education systems to hire candidates who decided to become teachers as their second-best choice. Half of these students leave school after a few years, or have no intention of implementing their formal certification as teachers. This has an overall effect on their young students and brings about ongoing deterioration. It is crucial that education systems throughout the world find a way to engage appropriate young people and invest all their

efforts in turning them into outstanding teachers. These teachers will be able to play the role of leading educators as motivated and courageous mentors, and will implement the required changes in their advanced pedagogical, moral, and professional points of view. They will be sufficiently talented to embark on the process of cultivating the future of the next generation, particularly within the complex reality of mounting fundamental anti-liberal movements, and intricate political, social, and economic problems. These ideas lead us to Nel Noddings' (2013) points of view: Reality necessitates us to see the world not as a collection of cultures and peoples but rather view it through global eyes and adopt a cosmopolitan way of thinking which should precede all specialization in teaching. This classroom cultural and heterogeneous mosaic mandates an attitude and didactic methodologies based on synergy and cultural collaboration, without relinquishing ethnic uniqueness. This approach will train students to become good citizens in the future – which is one of the basic values of a good educator in all cultures and countries.

A change in the orientation of the teaching profession now demands not only academic and professional anchors in the teachers training program, but also a kind of 'political compass' coupled with awareness of the fact that unlike a scientific compass, the pedagogical one is given to social, cultural and political change. The ability to accustom both teachers and students to a discussion of controversial issues, and conduct a conversation in which conflicting opinions are expressed, is not only important from the pedagogical point of view, but is also essential for cultivating doubt and reflection, particularly in heterogeneous classrooms in countries in which different populations, religions, and ethnic groups exist (Naveh, 2017).

In the attempt to develop theories and practices of teaching and learning, diversity and multiculturalism are most important for teacher training processes. These will assist teachers in expressing and sharing their state of mind with other students, and will expose them to other and different cultures, thus creating empathy and understanding; nonetheless, they will also create moral and educational problems. Coping with this issue is particularly crucial in times when racism defeats humanism, as is often the case throughout the world. Devoid of any form of critical thinking, people still hate others due to their religion, political attitudes, and their sexual or cultural identities. The assumption that students are deeply influenced by their cultural identity and heritage, and that their teachers should master educational approaches that appreciate and recognize their cultural backgrounds, is still far from the current state of affairs. Students are not adequately encouraged to learn about the cultural backgrounds and identities of other students in their class, nor do they accept others as equals. Even though teacher trainees hold different political and pedagogical opinions, and even though they belong to different educational and ideological movements, it is important to stress that numerous colleges and schools of education show a change in curriculum, and support learning standards that focus on cultural groups and a variety of learning experiences.

Thus, there is evidence of new pedagogical methods in special courses based on human nature and educational values. Progressive educational philosophers such as, Jean-Jacques Rousseau ([1762] 1979), John Dewey ([1916] 2009), Paulo Freire ([1970] 2007, 2014), Janusz Korczak ([1929] 2009) or Nel

Noddings (2013) have become an integral part of academic assignments and syllabuses in the didactic studies of professional teachers. Understanding their educational and social methods exposes students - both younger and older people, and future and senior teachers - to wide scope intellectual doctrines which familiarize them with social justice, ethics and cultural-theological sciences, prompting them to become aware of diverse global approaches. These recent provocative programs in the process of training excellent teachers - both theoretically and practically - require them to be sufficiently capable of assuming full responsibility for their educational calling. This ongoing change in the school/academy system climate may also prevent cultural and racial bias, and its distorted political and popular reverberations in their daily work, study, and research. At the university, college or school, and in their community activities, teachers must be free of cultural and social discrimination and any environment that may endanger the mind and soul of their students and their capability to make their own decisions and choose educational methods alongside the cultivation of critical thinking and broad horizons.

Following several educational studies on these issues, such as those conducted by Rosemary Henze, Geneva Gay and Richard Milner, it appears that the majority supports the idea that preparing educators as teachers in constructive ways with relevancy to their actual multicultural surrounding is both inevitable and urgent. A consensus exists on the necessity of creating proactive approaches and fruitful relations among students and teachers based on inter-ethnic activities. This innovates and promotes positive and intensified motivation toward advanced studies, and enables them to establish an ethical code and ground rules which do not tolerate racism, humiliation or disrespect. (Henze, 2002; Milner, 2015). They recognize difficulties that arise among teachers and their mentors in focusing on cultural responsive teaching and ethical empathic understanding as the natural quality of their professional skills. It is essential that they know how this relates to their educational work and recognize their responsibility in constantly bridging gaps between theory and practice, between generic and general dictated principles and the sensitivity of different backgrounds, levels of competence and knowledge with unique characteristic expressions in any classroom (Gay, 2010). It is not only about being excellent teachers with a high standard curriculum, but also about blending their teaching and their inner soul and talents, in addition to the subject they teach at school. This is the art of teaching that also involves their personality. Gay continues to explain the teacher's potential power to design their students' minds, abilities, and personalities by removing the veil of threat and untouchability that often encompasses them. The objective is to help teachers encourage the development of dialogues with their students, capturing their thoughts and attention, and engaging both their students and their own feelings at the same time, inside and outside the classroom. These arguments are based on the belief that to be an educator in a state where cultural diversity reigns, means to strengthen humanistic norms and cultural differences due to their importance to humanity. As such, no teacher can ignore his or her role and its significance to human dignity.

However, we should not forget the inevitable problems manifested by those who argue that assessing students of different cultures, with different

levels of language and knowledge abilities, may be unfavorable toward disadvantaged students, as it ignores their difficulties due to false expectations. Some of them are still not fluent in the local language and some interpret information differently - depending on their skills, stage of adjustment and cultural origins. The same is true of lecturers, teachers, and all those who represent policies of a country or a region that relate not only to educational considerations, but also to economic or urban aspects that exist in the environment of the students and teachers, their communal belonging, and the financial status of their families (Quiroz & Milam-Brooks, et. al, 2014). Taking the same tests and using the same evaluation scales in every country and cultural community creates dilemmas about fairness and ethical educational codes which often are not taken into proper account. Doubtlessly, educational systems, teachers and students and even their parents, must learn how to interact in a diverse environment and identify its positive aspects and common benefits, such as in the shared educational networks that were developed in Northern Ireland, for example, for several years, Catholic and Protestant children have been studying together in multi-community cooperative schools. It appears that this collaboration is not self-evident, and is accompanied by cultural and political complexities and difficulties relating to national belonging and identity, of teachers, students and their families. The findings of the researchers of multicultural education and pedagogical experts in Belfast show the extent of the impact of this collaboration on education, how the students have learned to accept the 'other' and nurture the ability to contain and study together, and recognize the advantages of this type of multicultural integrative education. Acts of violence have diminished, and animosity and religious entrenchment have gradually blurred. The researchers argue that this model should be examined in other countries where multinational and diverse religions exists (such as the United States, France, Germany and Israel (Hughes, 2017). The problem is that a chasm always exists between research and academic theories and the quotidian reality in schools and in the teaching profession.

After all that has been said and described above, as much as educational colleges invest in pedagogical training and professional development, most of the new teacher graduates, who regard the creation of a harmonious environment in school as their professional goal, admit that this is insufficient. More field experience and theoretical, didactic, and multicultural studies must be added to their studies and professional preparation. By developing a constructive approach to education as a link for implementing social and cultural behavior, teachers will be able to guarantee that their lessons and methods will remain relevant to and have an impact on the daily life of their students. This is the responsibility of teacher trainees and mentors: to create pedagogical platforms which will encourage future teachers to become involved as far as possible in the demands of their students' reality, despite their dissimilar cultural backgrounds, historical narratives, and values. One of the most significant aims of the professional preparation of teachers in colleges of education is to develop the future teachers' multicultural perspectives and understanding. These ideas should also be reflected in the theoretical and practical activities of educational and social systems in all schools, despite their

diverse identities (Veugelers, 2011). The next section of this article will introduce the source of several ideas related to the fact that at present becoming a teacher demands not only high-level academic skills and excellency, but also creativity, a sense of leadership, and a great deal of courage; It will introduce the Israeli case study as an example of methods and practical advice for teachers in a multicultural society, and attempt to uncover similar problems and points of departure, and the differences that make the situation of the Israeli teacher unique, unlike teachers in other Western countries.

Teaching in a multicultural-situational reality: The Israeli case study

A strong correlation exists between liberal and democratic communities and the need to develop multicultural approaches and open-minded attitudes toward foreigners, immigrants, and ethnical-religious diversity. Thus, tolerance and empathy are important characteristic expressions in our daily life, not to mention their significance for teachers and students in different educational systems - kindergartens, schools and academic campuses. These arguments exist in most Western countries and societies, and often prompt political and educational changes with the objective of raising the racial and multicultural awareness of teachers. This is not limited to professional aspects and organizational factors. First and foremost, it is the teachers' obligation and responsibility to clarify their own cultural identity and personal views (Johnson, 2002). This matter evokes difficulties in developing appropriate curriculums and training programs which include diverse viewpoints and pedagogical tools which will encourage dialogues and open discussions, make room for all voices and social, ethnical, theological and political approaches. In her studies, Johnson shows how crucial it is for teacher trainees to understand the perspectives, thoughts and feelings of others, prior to all lessons and activities. She places emphasis on the development of a corresponding strong connection between inner life at school and social life outside it in most diverse communities and cultures. It is necessary to implement these educational insights and train teachers to become more constructive and more aware. Being enlightened human beings, who are oriented toward dynamic geo-political and social change, will turn them not only into excellent teachers, but also into positive activists (See: Hill-Jackson & Lewis, 2010). Recently, and particularly over the past ten years, we have witnessed several changes in the field of teacher training programs. Education departments in American universities and colleges began preparing and educating newly trained teachers in special programs which provided them with advanced skills and innovative methods (Berry; Darling, 2013). It is evident that teachers who adopted special psychological-sociological skills for teaching in multicultural communities, in addition to coping with other educational problems, decided to continue teaching for five to ten years after graduation, and continued their professional development more than others (Yogev & Michaeli, 2009; Arnett, 2015).

Following this description of some of the world's acute problems regarding diversity, and the increase of multicultural issues related to education, let us focus on how this affects the relevant systems and teacher training programs in Israel, considering that the country's fragile political-social situation has additional effects on "regular" teachers as discussed above. As in other

countries, teachers in Israel are involved, particularly as of the beginning of this century, with the massive stream of migrants from the Middle-East and Africa (Clark-Oates et. al. & Robertson, 2016). These facts fall in line with European case studies and the issues dealing with integrative minorities in diverse communities that have developed over the years in the United States as well. Cultural diversity can be found in all stages of the students' studies and preparation. Like their counterparts in other Middle-Eastern countries, they are exposed to geo-political and military unresolved conflicts, compounded with problems related to different identities, religions, and historical narratives and backgrounds, all of which make it imperative to become more than "simply excellent teachers". They must be loyal to their government's policies and educational doctrines and as far as possible, become progressive teachers with broad intellectual horizons, who pursue growth and modern thinking. In their attempt to act in this complexity, they must play a dual role, and adopt bridging methods to create optional platforms for their students as multidisciplinary mentors. As Carine Allaf (2014) explains in her research, there is no doubt that becoming a teacher in one of the Middle-Eastern countries at present, demands other "talents" as well; facing unacceptable and absurd daily scenes and moral dilemmas that often impel them to cope with cognitive dissonance, accompanied by urgent requirements to act or to become immediately involved, preferring local state principles instead of their personal ones, even if they often reject them ideologically.

The Arab Spring generated chain reactions among the young intellectual elite, which evidently brought about an increase in the number of branches of international universities in all the Arab countries. As Allaf underscored in her study, most of these universities did not offer a full academic syllabus as offered on their home campuses in Europe and the US, and hence they did not offer International Studies, but rather adapted a kind of 'deformed' and combined local-state political-educational program (Allaf, 2014: 95). Following this brief review, the time has come to describe how this affects Israel's educational policies and educational systems. The main argument which will be introduced here is that even though Israel is part of the Middle-East, Israeli teachers are confronted with different types of obstacles, and hence there are differences between them and teachers in the neighboring countries. We will introduce unfamiliar facts about teacher training programs in Israel from other points of view, which are essential when comparing them to other countries. These will illuminate the core of this case study and reinforce the main arguments regarding the teachers' special preparation.

In most Arab countries, it would be highly unlikely to find Jewish-Israeli students in universities or academic colleges of education, or teachers at schools. On the other hand, there are numerous Israeli Arabs and Palestinians in the State of Israel who are free to choose study medicine, technological research, education or industry, with no restrictions. Among them you may find professors, doctors, engineers, lawyers and teachers. Despite socio-political difficulties, they invest efforts in integrating into Israeli reality. Some of them are highly successful and have made impressive contributions not only to their Muslim-Christian-Druze-Bedouin communities, but also to the overall Jewish-Israeli society and the State of Israel.

Accordingly, being a lecturer or a teacher trainee in academic courses or pedagogical practice lessons in colleges of education demands a totally different attitude and personal-mental-psychological capacities. In times of war they are faced with unthinkable situations when students – sons and daughters, sisters and brothers of 'the enemy' on both sides, sit next to one another in the same classroom, and conduct an academic conversation about an article or other professional issues, while their relatives are fighting against one another in the battlefield. At times, lessons are held in air raid shelters during an attack – and teachers, mentors of the university or college, Arab and Jews, residents of the same country, but loyal to different nationalities and flags, who support opposing sides, share the same space. This example, one of many, shows the unique complexity of the multicultural and social situation in Israel which has a substantial impact on the methods and practices of teacher training, and on the developmental processes as excellent educators.

In such unusual situations, as well as in routine life, teachers and students are required, mainly in mixed cities in which Jews and Arabs live near, such as Jaffa, Haifa, Acre, Nazareth and Ramleh, and of course Jerusalem, to present multi-national, and often, bilingual skills. They are confronted, often against their will, with reality tests that are beyond their pedagogical skills. They become the agents who connect diverse and often contradictory historical narratives, beliefs and worldviews, in an attempt to produce a common road which will facilitate the comprehension of reality and provide them with tools to choose a path and consolidate a standpoint and awareness in the future. In this sense, the Israeli teacher carries crucial responsibilities (Naveh, 2017: 275).

The distribution of Israeli society shows that there are over six million Jews (75.6%), one million two hundred thousand Muslims (16.6%), one hundred fifty-two thousand Christians (2.1%), one hundred twenty thousand Druze (1.6%) and the remaining population belong to other religions or define themselves as atheists. It is important to underscore that half of the colleges of education in Israel train religious students – Jews and non-Jews alike. In addition, another fact complicates matters: over 65% of the Jewish population serves in the IDF (the Israeli Defense Forces) in which enlistment is compulsory for all Jewish citizens between the ages of eighteen and twenty (for women) and twenty-one (for men). They are called up for reserve duty once or twice a year, some for only a few days, while others for over four weeks, up to the age of forty-five, and some even later in life, depending on rank, army unit and role, and in the case of women, depending on their family status (unmarried, married officers, pregnant or mothers). In other words, approximately 65% of Israeli teachers served or are still serving in the army. This means that some of the students in universities and colleges of education, who are trainees in schools and aim to become teachers or permanent teachers, and teachers in fact, are absent several times a year (one week or a month), and in times of war for longer periods, and some – orthodox Jews, Israeli Arabs and Palestinians students – do not. When in training, these teachers are required to study and practice together in schools with Jewish, Arab, Christian, Bedouin, Druze populations or in special schools for immigrant children. These experiences, these mental, moral and physical obligations, inevitably require

them to ignore this part of their lives and to focus, objectively as far as possible, on their educational and pedagogical obligations as excellent teachers trained to encourage dialogue and enlightened democratic and humanistic activities, despite the diverse surroundings in which they live. These facts may illuminate and clarify other case studies in countries that cope with similar situations, particularly in Europe with its massive flow of immigrants, hostile activities, and the new social and political situations with their plethora of unresolved problems.

Israel, a multicultural and democratic society, invests great efforts in becoming part of the Western world. Therefore, it is imperative to provide special pedagogical platforms with the objective of consolidating the next generation and conducting a dialogue between its Jewish and non-Jewish residents, which is largely the result of a unique political and social situation, and its problematic geo-political environment. It is important to understand that the only way to edify the minds of students, in all matters that pertain to their personalities and psychological and cultural needs, is through meta-education, which means that as a student teacher you must separate your personal viewpoints from your professional obligations, and thus you are not the one who determines the means of achieving this end. Subsequently, training future teachers with notable awareness of the needs of the minorities by cultivating their knowledge and empathy, prepares them far better and boosts their self-confidence and responsibility to act as teachers with initiative, from kindergarten through high school. This is the main reason why special excellent teacher training programs are so essential, now more than ever.

There are two main training programs for excellent teachers: Regev¹ and Hotam.² The Regev program has been operating in the Kibbutzim College of Education since 1998. The essence of the fundamental idea which guides those involved in the program is the belief that investment in recruiting and training students with outstanding academic qualifications, and cultivating their social and cultural agendas, will raise the prestige of the teaching profession. It will also favorably raise their own prestige, and bring about a drastic change in the standard of teaching in Israel, with all its social and political difficulties (Libman & Zelikovicz; Yogev & Michaeli, 2009).

Since 2011, and after more improvements were introduced to the excellent teacher's program, candidates were interviewed to ascertain their aptitude for different tracks, as well as their personality sorting tests administered by the program's director to identify their intellectual capacity to express themselves, their orientation vis-à-vis current events in the cultural and intellectual world, and the extent of their commitment to education. The training program's new curriculum consists of an additional twelve hours of exclusive courses. Many of the courses relate to science and are conducted in seminars which include field experience, methodological analysis, and writing research papers. In return, the excellence program students are required to commit themselves to another fifty-six hours of teaching in schools in the periphery and other multicultural schools (in addition to their two hundred twenty-four hours of practical disciplinary and pedagogical work): ultra-

¹ The initials of "Rosh Gadol Behoraa" - can-do attitude, "Open head in teaching", in Hebrew.

² 'Imprint', in Hebrew.

Orthodox schools (separate schools for girls and boys), Arab and Druze schools, and special international schools for illegal immigrants (their majority from Asia and Africa). Over and above their studies in the specific areas of expertise, students are required to devote another one hundred and twenty hours to a variety of activities in the community and on campus, tutoring students with special needs, and working as assistant teachers with new immigrants and students of the minorities. Moreover, they are required to study Arabic and the Islamic and Christian historical narratives.

The second program for training outstanding teachers in Israel is Hotam, which has been operating since 2010. It is a new joint initiative of the Ministry of Education, Joint Israel, Haifa University and the Hakol Hinuch (education is everything) movement, which recruit excellent bachelor and master degree graduates, (mainly in the sciences) as school teachers. The program operates as part of the Teach for All Global Organization that combines innovative educational activity in several countries, headed by the US and the UK. In comparison with the Regev program, Hotam is condensed and intensive; it is conducted over five consecutive weeks during the summer semester. Studies take place during the day and the evening, and the students live in a dormitory. It has become clear that this intensive program does not fully train teachers and prepare them (as Regev does) to cope with the multicultural complex situation previously described. It failed to instill in them the overall pedagogical, sociological, and didactic basic concepts of necessary knowledge required of teachers in the field in such a tight timeframe, particularly in Israel's complex social and political reality. Therefore, the percentage of those remaining is less than fifty percent, far lower than in other countries. This is one of the critical differences between the two programs, which sets apart the training program in Israel from other countries, and these are the differences between teacher training programs and methods in Israel and other Middle-Eastern countries. Nevertheless, the Regev program proves that despite the difficulties involved in becoming an excellent teacher in the State of Israel, it is now a national challenge and part of the inevitable ideology of bearing an impact and effecting political-cultural change which appear so vital.

Conclusions

Teachers, educators, teacher professionalism and excellence are now standing at a crossroads. Moral purpose and change agents are implicit in what good teaching and effective change mean, but they are society's great untapped resource for radical and continuous improvement and revolutionary change. As we have seen in this article, there are programs in Israel for training excellent teachers, teachers who will enjoy a combined capacity, both academic and pedagogical, and who will be connected to the social political reality in which they themselves and the next generation will live. Teacher training programs in various academic universities and colleges (in Europe as well as in the US) frequently guarantee excellent teachers who will know how to perform their role – excellently and professionally. Nonetheless, the results do not always fall in line with expectations and promise. The accelerated programs do not make it possible for student teachers to mature within the

pedagogical world, nor do they allow them to be sufficiently exposed to the corpus of knowledge and school experiences that derive from different avenues of culture, education and identity. A person, as talented and as well-qualified as he or she may be, cannot become a teacher and an excellent teacher, in accelerated and marathonic courses (such as those conducted in Hotam), just like it would be impossible to train a doctor or a pilot in a five-week crash course. Becoming a teacher, one who needs to fulfill several tasks simultaneously, involves inner personal growth and demands time. This is the difference between the Regev Program and other programs. Perhaps this is also the difference between innovative excellent teachers in Israel and other teachers in different societies as I have reviewed, where students are required to cover academic, didactic and cultural courses and practical internship work in six or seven years, in an intensive five, and often six-day schedule, including summer courses, with no shortcuts.

We need to invest much more in proving why teaching development is crucial to the future of society, particularly now when in some communities and countries fundamental ideas prevail over the values of democracy: free thought, action and abilities, and the need for an ongoing dialogue between people. Above all, we require action that links initial teacher preparation and development, based on moral purpose and change agents, to the corresponding restructuring of universities and schools and their relationships. Systems will not change on their own accord. Rather, the actions of individuals and small groups working on new conceptions intersect to produce breakthroughs. New conceptions, once mobilized, become new paradigms. The teaching profession demands interaction with students who come from diverse backgrounds, under taxing conditions, working within a multicultural community. Most researchers believe that the quality of teaching cannot be ascertained only by indicators such as academic degrees, the number of years of study, experience, grades, and academic or pedagogic abilities. Intellectual teachers must express themselves verbally, and have a broad education which enables them to act as agents of culture and universal knowledge. As professionals, teachers must possess broad educational knowledge and must be well-versed in the educational processes regarding the subjects they teach.

Merited teachers are caring, committed to their students, consider their emotional and intellectual abilities, and they themselves are dedicated to their calling. If we add to these qualities the ability to cultivate critical thinking and a dialogue that enables everyone to be heard, we may reach the definition of the excellent teacher, who has the capacity to make a valued impact on the future of his or her students, particularly in a multicultural and diverse society such as Israel. We should not forget: A multicultural liberal encouraging climate is not enough to cultivate a positive change in entrenched attitudes toward tolerance, multiculturalism and the professional abilities to cope with the complicated status of teachers. Neither is it possible to ignore the political, social and regional situation that encircles teachers and students. A change should be created in the perception of the role of the teacher in the existing reality; teachers cannot function merely as a source of knowledge and practice, as mentors and as pedagogical operators, but must be constantly

aware of what is evolving around them, and play a part in the consolidation of their students' characters, identities, and attitudes (Gipps, et al, 2016).

One of the main targets of the teacher training program is to train teachers and convince them that this is their national, professional and predestined struggle. There is nothing more important for the sake of the next generation than to become educators and teachers, and assume responsibility for young peoples' minds, behavior and activities. Following this point of view, teachers become revolutionary leaders, intellectual activists, who, despite all the social, cultural and political difficulties, possess the power, eventually, to create the long-awaited change.

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