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Abstract

The current study has emanated from the growing interest in promoting the partnership between parents and the educational staff in preschools in Israel, and the public and professional discussion that surrounds it. In 2008, owing to data indicating scarcity of research on early-childhood education, a committee of experts convened to examine methods of education for this age (גריןבאום ופריד, 2011). The committee focused on examining the inter-relations between the family and the early-childhood (3-8) education framework, and their relationship to children's development and success in the system of education. In 2011, Tal and Bar (טל ובר, 2011) published an article entitled "Family relationships – early childhood framework of education in Israel: A multicultural view". The article presents an overview on the available research knowledge on the issue at hand, and offers conclusions and recommendations for new paths of research and action. Studies on parents' and educators' stances and perceptions regarding their inter-relations have been conducted in Israel. However, a research-based corpus of knowledge, aimed at examining the relationships between educational perceptions and individual variables of preschool teachers and their perceptions of the preschool organizational culture and parental knowledge about the preschool is yet lacking.

The purpose of the current study is to examine the relationship between the preschool teacher's perception of the preschool (her perception of her partnership with the parents, and of the role of the preschool as promoting learning and social development), her sense of self-efficacy and professional self-image. In addition, the study investigates the relations between the preschool teacher's perception of the preschool and her perception of the preschool's organizational culture, and parental knowledge about the preschool. Within the framework of the study, we examine the mediating effect of the variables of the preschool teacher's sense of self-efficacy and professional

self-image on the relationship between her educational perceptions and her perceptions of the preschool's organizational culture and parental knowledge about the preschool. Additionally, the study compares two educational frameworks (pre-compulsory preschool for children aged 3-4 and obligatory preschool education for those aged 5-6), in the main parameters.

The research questions the study focuses on are as following: 1. Does a relationship exist between the educational perceptions of the preschool teacher and her sense of self-efficacy and her personal and professional self-image, the organizational culture of the preschool and parental knowledge about the preschool? 2. According to the preschool teacher's perception, is there a difference between the variable of parental knowledge about the preschool and the variable of organizational culture as perceived by the teacher and as per educational framework (pre-compulsory-preschool for children aged 3-4 and compulsory preschool education for those aged 5-6)? 3. To what extent do the variables of the teacher's sense of professional self-efficacy and her professional self-image mediate the relationship between the teacher's educational perceptions and her background variables, and her perception of the organizational culture of the preschool and parental knowledge about the preschool?

The research method is quantitative. The study sampling comprises 150 state preschools, from the Jewish middle-upper class sector. Half of the participating preschools are pre-compulsory, for children 3-4 years of age, and the other half are compulsory education preschools for children aged 5-6. The preschool sampling ranges all over the country, following the Ministry of Education's main regional division (Central, Northern, and Jerusalem regions). There are 37 preschools for each region. The participants comprise 150 preschool teachers and 450 parents (between 1 and 3 from each preschool). Data exposing teachers' and parents' educational perceptions was gathered through the use of closed questionnaires and open questions. The topics are as following: 1. The

teacher's perception of her partnership with the parents; 2) The teacher's perception of the role of the preschool as promoting learning and social development; 3) The preschool organizational culture as perceived by the teacher; 4) The teacher's sense of self-efficacy; 5) The teacher's professional self-image; 6) Parental knowledge about the preschool. This study focuses in particular on predicting parental knowledge and the nature of the organizational culture in the preschool according to the teacher's perception.

The Research findings indicate that the higher the teacher's perception of her partnership with the parent is, the higher are her sense of self-efficacy and her professional self-image. In addition, the data show significant associations between the teacher's perception of the preschool as promoting learning and social development and her sense of self-efficacy. Also, the study demonstrates a significant association between the teacher's perception of her partnership with the parents and her perception of the organizational culture of the preschool. However, the study found only a partial association between the teacher's perception of the preschool as promoting learning and social development and her perception of its organizational culture. Moreover, the study did not find significant correlations between the teacher's perception of her partnership with the parents and her perception of the preschool as promoting learning and social development and parental knowledge about the preschool. Furthermore, the findings indicate a significant correlation between the teacher's sense of self-efficacy and level of professional self- image and her perception of the preschool's organizational culture. Finally, the findings indicate an association between the teacher's professional self-image and parental knowledge about the preschool. However, no connection was found to exist between the teacher's sense of self-efficacy and parental knowledge about the preschool. Regarding the variables on which the study focuses, while most of the variables contributed to predicting the nature of the organizational culture in the preschool

according to the teacher's perception, only the variable expressing the teacher's professional knowledge is related to parental knowledge about the preschool.

Theoretical implications

Regarding the theoretical implications of the study, the findings indicate the importance of parental partnership, since this variable was found as related to the teacher's professional self-image as well as her perception of the organizational culture in the preschool. In addition, parental partnership contributed to the teacher's sense of self-efficacy, which contributed to parental knowledge about the preschool. These data support Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological development theory, according to which the various environments in which the child grows, as well as the interrelations among these environments, have a crucial effect on her/his development. This study points to different relationships between the various environments. A positive system of interrelations can contribute to the child's development, while uncoordinated or conflicting interrelations – even if the system as such functions well on its own – might have a negative effect on the child's development and functioning (גרינבאום ופריד, 2011 ; שפרלינג, 2019).

Practical implications

Regarding our research practical implications, we recommend the development of professional training and development programs for preschool teachers, which would focus on promoting teachers' educational perceptions. Our study found these to be related to the teacher's self-efficacy and her professional self-image. We suggest that these programs focus on developing the preschool organizational culture by developing the preschool teacher's educational perceptions, and the individual variables found as mediating this relationship. Furthermore, it is recommended to construct a support system for preschool teachers to help them cope with the complexity of their role, and specifically, as this study suggests, help them cope with the issue of optimal partnership

with parents, as this was found to be related to her perception of organizational culture. Recommended professional development programs for teachers should deal with parental partnership and knowledge, as this study found no significant relations between these two variables.