Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how School Social Engagement Coordinators perceive social engagement, its goals, its contribution to academic learning, personal development and social and civic responsibility, and whether Social Engagement is perceived as Community Service or as Service-Learning. The aim of this study is to create a typology of educators' perceptions towards Social Engagement.

Social engagement programs are a part of educational systems all over the world. In Israeli schools, social engagement programs have been implemented since the 1980's. In 2014 the National Educational Curriculum for Personal Development and Social Engagement was introduced in all Israeli secondary schools. This program is compulsory for all 10-12 grades and is a requirement for graduation. Each school has a designated teacher serving as a coordinator of the implementation of the curriculum.

Studies differentiate between two types of social engagement programs: **Community Service** and **Service-Learning** (Furco, 1996; Skinner & Chapman, 1999; Barton 2019). Community Service means that students contribute their time for the benefit and betterment of other people in their community. Community Service activities, which are usually not part of the formal school curriculum, aim to develop compassion, commitment and empathy. They usually do not include academic goals, reflection or critical analysis. Service-Learning, on the other hand, which is planned as an integral part of the formal curriculum, is defined as a strategy which integrates three components: **meaningful service to the community, academic learning and reflection**, and aims to enrich the learning experience, to promote social engagement and responsibility and to strengthen the community. Within Service-Learning pedagogy three foci have been identified: (a) skill-set practice and reflexivity, (b) civic values and critical citizenship, and (c) social justice activism (Britt, 2012).

Studies which examined the effectiveness of Social Engagement on academic achievements and student engagement outcomes showed mixed result (Metz et al., 2003; Meyer et al., 2004). One of the key components for the success of Social Engagement Programs is the active involvement and professional development of educators (Billig, 2000; Krebs, 2008; Dymond et al., 2013). Educators serve as leaders whose role is to mediate between students and community partners, establish clear expectations, and accompany the students' learning process and reflection (Cooper 2014; George-Paschal et al. 2019). Therefore, it is valuable to examine the perceptions of educators who are responsible for Social Service programs implementation within their schools.