Bar-Ilan University

Simulative Experience of

Teacher-Education Students

for Developing Social-Emotional Skills,

and Differences Between Online and

Face-to-Face Workshops

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Abstract

The focus of this research was examining the use of the simulation workshop as part of the training process of teacher-education students, and the impact of the workshops on the development of their social-emotional skills (Social Emotional Competences). In addition, the study examined the differences between online simulation workshops and face-to-face workshops. The use of online simulation workshops is new and has developed rapidly due to the outbreak of the corona epidemic and the transition to distance learning. Therefore, the importance of testing the effectiveness of these workshops compared to face-to-face workshops has increased.

The skills required of the teacher for his success in his role are many, and consist of various fields, such as knowledge and pedagogical skills (Liakopoulou, 2011). Of particular importance are the socio-emotional abilities (Katz et al., 2020). Teachers are required to develop these abilities to cope with the many challenges they face at work, such as stress (Koptelov et al., 2018), coping with complex conflict situations (Lasater, 2016), and emotional overload that can lead to burnout (Puertas Molero et al., 2019). Moreover, teachers with high social skills constitute a significant model in this field for their students.

At the same time, there is a consensus among researchers in the field of education that in the process of teacher training, students should be given opportunities to develop social-emotional skills (Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Poulou, 2018; Murano et al., 2019; Palomera et al., 2017). Researchers also agree that Socio-emotional abilities may promote classroom management, teaching abilities and the quality of teacher-student interactions (Blewitt, 2020). In practice, in the training processes and professional development of teachers, there is a lack of training programs that address the social and emotional skills required of teachers (Social Emotional Learning - SEL), and training is focused primarily on pedagogical skills (Hamer Bondro, 2014).

The definition of the abilities acquired within the SEL varies according to various models that include different social skills. This study focused on the following skill cluster: emotional self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, active listening, and coping with conflict situations.

One of the most important traditional means of teacher-education students training is the practical work - the field experience of students at school during their studies. (Badiee & Kaufman, 2015; Kidd & Murray, 2020). The purpose of this experience is to enable teacher-education students to use the tools they have acquired in their academic studies and to develop teaching skills (Chizhik & Chizhik, 2018; Huong et al., 2020). Simulation training, which this study dealt with, focuses on the skills needed by teachers, especially in the socio-emotional field, which the practicum in fieldwork does not provide, or provides only to a limited extent.

Simulation presents a concrete and accurate model that simulates real-life scenarios (Sauvé et al., 2007). Simulation has many benefits that make it an effective tool for learning and practicing. It creates for students a safe environment for authentic practice and experience in decision-making and complex situations (Dalinger et al., 2020; Faria, 2001; Garris et al., 2002; Salas et al., 2009; Wolfe, 1994). Thus, simulations can be an appropriate tool to

training programs, to enable teacher- education students to experience the range of skills required of them (Badiee & Kaufman, 2015; Thompson et al., 2019).

During the simulation workshops the students takes part in a staged conflict situation which is close to reality as possible. After the simulation is performed, the group facilitator conducts research on the course of the simulation, and its' results help students participating in the simulation to expand upon what was learned in situations beyond the simulation framework itself (Cheng et al., 2014; Crookall, 2010; Fanning & Gaba, 2007; Neill & Wotton, 2011; Salas et. al., 2009). After receiving feedback on their functioning, students analyze on what is being done in the simulation, and they examine the pros and cons of their responses and the motivations for their behavior (Dalinger et al., 2020; Kiili, 2007; Lovelace et al., 2016; Penfold, 2009; Wolfe, 1994). Previous studies have found that online simulations have a positive effect on the professional development of teacher education students, and they help bridge the gap between theory and practice during teaching studies (McGarr, 2020; Angelini & Muñiz, 2021).

Due to the global corona epidemic that began in early 2020, academic education institutions had to transfer most curricula to online learning, to prevent the spread of the virus and maintain the health of faculty and students (Hodges et al., 2020). The simulations at the Lev Center, where this study was conducted, were also transferred to an online format. One of the aims of this research study was to examine the contribution of the use of remote simulation experiences to the success of student training. The difference between the two experiences (face-to-face or online format) was solely in the medium in which the experience took place, with all other components of the workshop remaining the same.

The research questions were these: Does the simulated experience improve the students' socio-emotional abilities, according to four types of abilities tested; are there differences between face-to-face experience and online format experience.

The research was conducted in a combined, quantitative and qualitative, method, which allows a deeper examination of the research questions and provides several complementary perspectives (Huynh et al., 2019).

The study involved 203 students who studied in a teaching certificate program at a large and well-known university institution in the center of the country (in the course "The teacher as an educator"). Among the students who answered a demographic questionnaire, 135 were women (87%) and 20 (13%) men. The average age of the students was 27.64 (standard deviation: 8.24). 87 students (62.1%) studied for a bachelor's degree (B.A.), 16 (11.4%) were in their master's degree studies and the rest studied in various settings. 95 students (67.4%) had no teaching experience, 20 (14.2%) had one year of experience, 21 (14.9%) had 2-3 years of experience and 5 (3.5%) had more than 4 years of experience. 117 (83%) students were from the Jewish sector and 24 (17%) from the Arab sector.

The research set-up included, as stated, quantitative and qualitative data collection. In the quantitative channel, social - emotional abilities were measured using four questionnaires, which were adapted to this research: self-awareness questionnaire (Salovey et al., 1995), multidimensional empathy questionnaire (Davis, 1983), active listening questionnaire (Kourmousi et al. 2017) and a conflict management questionnaire. (Peacock & Wong, 1990). The research questionnaires were delivered on three dates: at the beginning of the course

(corresponding to lesson number 4, after the end of the system change period), In the middle of the course (lesson 10) and at its end (lesson 13). The response rate for the three transfers was 75%. In the qualitative channel, a short reflective questionnaire was given to all students about a day after participating in the workshop, and 202 students answered it.

The students were divided into four main comparable groups (two each semester), based on their enrollment in the course and workshop. Each semester, students were divided into an experiment group and a control group. The course content, the questionnaire content and the completion dates in each semester were the same as for the participants in the experimental group and the control group. The difference between the groups was that the students included in the experimental group participated in the simulation workshop before completing the second questionnaire in lesson number 10, whereas the participants in the control group participated in the simulation workshop only after completing the second questionnaire (also in lesson 10). Thus, both groups participated in the workshops, and one of the groups served as a control group at the time required.

The findings of the quantitative data analysis showed that the students' ability to deal with the conflict increased significantly after the workshop. However, no improvement was found after the workshop in the measures of empathy, active listening and self-awareness. These findings were obtained in both online and face-to-face workshops.

Although the findings of the quantitative study revealed only a partial contribution of participation in the simulation, the findings of the qualitative study showed that the workshop helped the participants develop empathy skills and gave them the opportunity to "put themselves in another person's shoes" and identify with him emotionally. The students also learned about the importance of the containing skill and understanding the pupil's place, even if it is sometimes seen during the conflict that they are standing on two opposite sides. Other skills to which the workshop contributed were effective communication and proper discourse. which are reflected frequently in what students wrote. In addition, the workshop helped to develop the students' sense of self-efficacy when starting out as teachers, and the understanding that they have a variety of abilities with which they can cope with the teaching work.

As for the differences between online simulation workshops and face-to-face workshops, this research is among the first studies in the evolving field of understanding the differences between these workshops on education topics. From its results it can be learned that an online simulation workshop helps students in their training processes.

To conclude, this research has a theoretical and an applied contribution. At the theoretical level, from this research one can learn about the importance and contribution of the simulative experience in the area of teachers' training for field work. On a practical level one can learn about the contribution of simulations - both face-to-face and online - to improve self-efficacy of the teacher-education students in dealing with conflicts. Simulation also contributes to improve other socio-emotional skills such as empathy, listening and emotional awareness, as can be seen from the students' reflective reports.

In future studies it is advisable to check whether the research results are maintained or changed after the students begin the field experience during the practical work, and whether there are differences in this regard between attending face-to-face workshops or attending

online workshops. In addition, it can be examined whether a longer experience, which includes several simulation workshop sessions - face-to-face and online format - will lead to a more significant change in students' abilities of empathy, active listening and self-awareness.