

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**Teachers' Pedagogical Considerations in Developing a Program
for Holocaust Studies as the Subject Matter for the "30/70
Principle"?**

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Abstract

In recent years, the education system has implemented a national program to promote meaningful learning. The program is also named "Principle 30/70", since 70% of the content of some subjects in the curriculum is included in the compulsory matriculation examination, while 30% of the content is studied as a separate section and assessed alternatively.

The Holocaust was selected by education officials as the topic to be taught in the 30% program in History. The teachers in the schools are responsible for the development of the program, including the choice of values to focus on, the content, and the teaching and assessment methods practiced in the classrooms.

The Holocaust is a major event in the history of Israeli society and therefore has great educational value. Thus, the values that must be nurtured, the content to be taught and the teaching methods should be taken into consideration. This study examined the pedagogical issues guiding the teachers in the development of their programs on the Holocaust.

As such, the research questions for this study are:

1. What are teachers' pedagogical considerations in developing a program for Holocaust studies as the subject matter for the "30/70 principle"?
2. How do teachers cultivate values in their classrooms?
3. What guides teachers in choosing the content they teach their students?
4. What are teachers' considerations in choosing the methods for teaching and assessment used in the classroom?

The Participants in this Study

The participants in this study are five teachers who teach the 30% program in History studies about the Holocaust. They teach in various secondary schools in the state education system, in different cities in the center of the country. The schools differ in character, size and socio-economic level of their students. The participants have experience in teaching in the education system that ranges from 6-20 years.

The Methodology

This study is a qualitative research study. This research method explores how people interpret and give meaning to their life stories. One of the types of life stories is work stories (Keinan, 2002). In recent years, teachers' work stories have become a prominent tool in the field of research on teaching. Research on teachers' work stories includes an investigation of teachers' thinking patterns and perceptions regarding the planning and implementation of learning processes. In other words, the goal is to try to understand why teachers do what they do in order to advance knowledge about the field of

teaching and to lead to improvement and professionalism in the teaching profession (Carter, 1993; Graber, 1995; Keinan, 2002; Merriam, 2016; Pajares, 1992; Tzabar-Ben Yehoshua, 2016).

This study was conducted using a multiple case study, since this is recognized to be an effective method for examining the pedagogical considerations of teachers. A multiple case study lends itself to identifying connections, comparisons and contrasts between the various cases, from which conclusions may be drawn in relation to social issues. In using case studies, it is possible to investigate the way teachers think about educational processes and their educational perceptions that contribute to the development of their teaching programs (Merriam, 1998; Shalsky & Alpert, 2007; Thomas, 2011; Tzabar-Ben Yehoshua, 2016; Zilberstein, 1995).

The research tools used in this study are:

- Semi-structured interviews designed to document the experiences of the participants in the development and implementation of the program and the significance of these experiences (Josselson, 2013; Shkedi, 2003).
- Observations of lessons conducted in order to identify processes and behaviors in accordance with the research questions and insights that emerged from the interviews (Shkedi 2003; Tzabar-Ben Yehoshua, 1990).
- Post-observation interviews, whereby points noted in the observations were discussed and expanded upon (Zilberstein 1995; Shkedi, 2003; Simons, 2010).
- Documents containing teaching plans, content and learning materials developed by the participants (Tzabar-Ben Yehoshua, 1990; 2016).

This study adhered to ethical guidelines as required in conducting research. Therefore, the identity of the participants is completely confidential and they have been given pseudonyms. In addition, prior to the beginning of the data collection process, the participants were asked to sign a form acknowledging their understanding of the objectives and procedures for the study, while giving their consent to participate in a recorded interview (either video or audio - according to the participants' preference). Permission was also gained to observe lessons and use the participants' written materials for research purposes.

The Research Findings

These are the main findings from this study:

1. In the programs developed by the participants several key values may be identified. These include: recognizing the Holocaust as an act performed by human beings, learning about dilemmas and decisions of people during the Holocaust, such as the dilemmas of the German people, of those who lived in the countries occupied by

the Nazis and of the Jewish people, and how the Holocaust is perceived in relation to the Jewish people and to universal aspects of human society today.

2. The issue of relevance is central to the development of the program for all participants. They all consider how best to facilitate their students' connection to the content, and how to integrate the content and methods of teaching with the values they wish to instill in their students. The desire to make learning relevant is evident in the choice of topics studied, in the development of teaching methods and in fostering ongoing discussion about values in the classrooms.
3. The main pedagogical considerations as to which subjects should be taught include:
 - Promoting in-depth historical knowledge of the Holocaust.
 - Connecting the content of the study to the personal heritage and lives of the students.
 - Connecting the students' knowledge about the Holocaust to current events and issues of relevance to human society today.
4. The main teaching methods and alternative methods of assessment used by the participants promote the nurturing of skills required for students in the 21st century and cultivate literacy skills through the use of texts. The participants see the 30% program as an opportunity to promote the development of skills that are necessary for their students as learners and as citizens of the world in the 21st century.
5. The "Principle 30/70" has had a positive effect on the professional work of the teachers. They report increased teamwork and collaboration between and an increased commitment by their colleagues to the successful application of the program in their schools.
6. The participants support the "Principle 30/70" program and recognize significant advantages for teachers' professional development, as well as opportunities to nurture students' values and skills that are not acquired in learning for the matriculation examination.
7. One of the greatest dilemmas among the participants is whether or not to choose the Holocaust as the subject to be studied in the framework of the 30% program. On the one hand, it is agreed that due to the importance of the subject of the Holocaust and the ethical issues that arise from it, it should be taught within the framework of the 30% program. On the other hand, it is argued that precisely because of the importance of the subject, it should be studied more extensively and students should be examined on the subject.
8. The participants feel empowered by their autonomy in planning the program and choosing the contents and teaching methods. At the same time, they feel that they have a great commitment and responsibility to assure meaningful implementation

of the program and a meaningful learning experience for their students. This autonomy redefines the role of the teacher in the teaching-learning process and offers the opportunity to teach with passion, creativity, deep thinking and great love for the profession.

The Contribution of the Study

The Holocaust is the subject chosen to be taught in History studies within the framework of the national program for meaningful learning and therefore the teachers are required to develop the 30% program in their school.

In this study, teachers' educational perceptions on the program were examined. In the program design, emphasis is placed on key values and the content selected as perceived necessary for teaching the Holocaust in the 21st century. In addition, the teaching and assessment methods that best nurture important skills and contribute to the students as members of society in the 21st century were examined.

This study is intended to contribute to educators who are responsible for the development of programs on the subject of the Holocaust, by offering a range of pedagogical considerations founded upon the practice and perceptions of teachers, that should be taken into consideration when designing and implementing the program.

This, in turn, is likely to contribute to the improved practice of teachers who teach the 30% program in History in particular, and in the education system overall.