

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**The Effects of Simulations
on Emotional Literacy and Locus of Control of
Pre-service Students**

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ABSTRACT

Emotions are an integral part of the teacher's professional life, and they accompany him in his daily work. Nonetheless, it appears that even scholars who study teacher training, who are aware of the complexity of this work, do not pay much attention to the emotional domain of the teacher's work (Rosiek, 2003).

Researchers (for example, Dolev, 2012; Ginat, 2007) report that awareness of emotions, positive emotions and confidence in their internal ability to meet the task and perform optimally improve teachers' routine work. Furthermore, studies show that teachers with a high social and emotional ability and with high self-awareness are more aware of their advantages and disadvantages, know how to motivate themselves and their students to learn, comprise a model in conflict situations and are conscious of the interrelations between them and their environment (Gibbs, 2003; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). These teachers also succeed in better advancing their students academically (Hoffman, 2009).

A research that was performed among student teachers indicated that the students want to acquire learning tools and skills. However, they also demand actual personal experience and not only theoretical studies (Toicher-Saar & Kremer-Hayon, 2001). It was found that understanding concepts and being able to explain and use them improve significantly after learning new information via simulations (Adams et al., 2008), and that those who are trained through simulations gain experiences of success, tools for effective conduct and strengthen their professional identity (Eisenhammer, Al-Yagor, Ziv, Mevarech, & Rahamim, 2010).

Reflexive self-observation and analysis of training experiences enable the teacher to be aware of his emotions, the emotions of others and thus to manage emotionally complex situations which he encounters (Shoffner, 2009). What is more, these are

acquired abilities that can be developed through learning and practice (Dolev & Lesem, 2017; Hen & Goroshit, 2011).

The present study aimed to examine the influence of training through simulations that focus on emotional aspects on the emotional literacy and locus of control of student teachers, by an intervention program that includes theoretical preparation, practical training and reflexive processing. The intervention program was carried out in collaboration with and guidance from the Institute for Simulations in Education at Bar-Ilan University. The simulations with which the students coped simulated conflictual situations from school life and afforded an encounter with complex copings under laboratory conditions and with a possibility for guided feedback. The emotional process with which teachers cope in their work was stressed in the development and during training through the simulations. During the course of the workshops, each student participated in three sessions of about half an hour, which were spread over the course of a month. Three-four simulations were presented in each session. In each session, the scenario was first presented to the students, and volunteers for the training were chosen such that each student experienced at least one simulation.

The research included 91 students in the teacher-training program of Bar-Ilan University. Of the participants, 56 (62%) were included in the experimental group and 35 (38%) were included in the control group. The study was conducted using the mixed methods research design in order to deepen the observation and understanding of the findings as well as to strengthen the internal and external validity of the research (Paul-Binyamin & Alpert, 2016). The main channel of the research is the quantitative channel. Data were also collected using the qualitative method.

Four questionnaires were used in the quantitative channel of the research: a background questionnaire, an emotional literacy questionnaire that was taken from the

questionnaire of Cooper and Sawaf (1997), a teacher's emotions questionnaire that is based on the questionnaire of Mevarech and Maskit (2015), and Levenson's (1981) locus of control scale which is based on Rotter's (1966) original measure. The research questionnaires were administered twice: at the beginning and at the end of semester courses (the research course and the control course) in the Teacher Training Unit. The qualitative channel of the research included interviews with ten volunteer students from the research and the control groups.

The research hypotheses were partially confirmed. The quantitative research findings indicate that in the variable of the students' emotions regarding themselves as teachers, an increase in the measure of negative emotions was found in the research group compared to the control group. This increase is explained by the understanding that the students were exposed, intensively and within a short time, to conflicts which flood complex dilemmas and emotions. An increase in two of the locus of control measures also occurred: internal locus of control which relies on the self, and external locus of control which relies on others. In both, an increase was found in the research group compared to the control group. This increase may indicate the contribution of the intervention program to the students' understanding of their influence on the happenings in their classroom and their ability to manage the situation. Nonetheless, the intervention program deepened the insight that it is not the teacher alone who manages the situation, but rather the entire set of emotions and needs that take place at the interpersonal level in the school life.

The qualitative research results clearly show the manner in which the intervention program flooded the centrality, importance and influence of emotions in teaching and the main significance of the feedback which the participant received on his performance in the simulation. The importance of the training experience in the simulation was also

prominent in the creation of a bridge between theory and practice and its contribution to the training process in the research group compared to the great disadvantage of its absence in the control group.

These findings can be understood from observing the process undergone by the student teachers, which afforded them a meaningful experience of reflection on personal and interpersonal processes through active learning, reception of feedback and metacognitive thinking which construct an acquaintance with the learner's own thinking process and its products, as well as taking responsibility for it (Flavell, 1976; Jenkins, 2012). Furthermore, metacognitive consciousness promotes environmental literacy (Adler, Zion, & Mevarech, 2015) and enables the person to understand the other and even to predict and explain his behaviors (Blum-Kulka & Hamo, 2010). All these create the basis for the creation of self-control processes, understanding the processes the person undergoes, better understanding of his environment and construction of a learning and self-regulation mechanism.

These findings are discussed at length on the background of the scientific literature.