

Shosh Millet

“It was the only place where I could say everything”... Pedagogical Mentoring for Novice Teachers

Descriptors: novice teacher, induction, pedagogical mentoring, mapping (descriptive) sentence, pedagogical mentor, empowerment

Abstract:

The article presents a follow-up case study of pedagogical mentoring for novice teachers as part of an induction project.

The theoretical framework included a survey of the professional literature on the difficulties beginning teachers encounter and induction programs and pedagogical supervision designed to assist them. The research was qualitative - content analysis and mapping facets of 35 observations, interviews and questionnaires. The research population was comprised of three pedagogical mentors, one from a university and two from a college, who mentored three groups of novice teachers - 49 teachers in all.

Findings were in two areas:

Mentoring style. Three patterns of mentoring emerged from a study of the mentoring relationship and content of the subjects: a group pattern for university graduates; an individual pattern for college graduates in the elementary school track; and a combined group/individual pattern for college graduates in the pre-school track. The primary areas where mentors provided assistance were discipline, personal counseling and improving the class atmosphere. According to feedback from mentees, the ideal mentor is a person who possesses knowledge and experience, gives direct, helpful suggestions, listens, supports and is empathetic and encouraging. The participants expressed much satisfaction with the group discussions and the specific support. Communication between mentor and mentees involved mutual trust, and the mentoring style employed by all three mentors was indirect - leading participants to engage in "joint thinking" and a process of personal reflection and coping.

** This article is based on the author's doctoral thesis, written under the supervision of Professor N. Zabar and Professor P. Tamir.*

Mentoring content. All three mentoring patterns exhibited a common body of "authentic knowledge". Moreover, in all three settings, the degree of devotion or focus on each mentoring components was similar: teaching techniques (45%), training activities (40%), empowerment processes (15%).

Perception of the pedagogical mentor's role and the perception of teaching was also found to be similar – encompassing emphasis on knowledge, the personal development of the mentee, and professional aspects.

The article discusses the importance of the study and its contribution to the training system (university, college), the hiring system (schools) and the induction system (internship).

Introduction

Beginning teachers encounter numerous difficulties that cause many to drop out of the educational system. At the same time, professionals engaged in teacher training often deliberate about the best methods to adopt in combating such attrition. The search for suitable tools to assist new teachers evoked the idea of conducting research that would seek to reveal, describe and analyze the characteristics of models of pedagogical mentoring for novice teachers, university and college graduates, during the first year of their work, in the framework of an induction project currently in operation.

Theoretical Framework

The proposed research is based on studies of novice teachers as well as those on pedagogical mentoring and the characterization of the pedagogical mentor. The research rationale is based on theoretical integration of all three domains.

The novice teacher

The initial stage of the teacher's work is regarded as the most difficult and critical to a novice teacher's career (Gold, 1996; Reynolds, 1992). It is the source of a high rate of attrition and leads many beginning teachers to leave the profession (Murnane et al., 1988), including some who have a high potential for excellence (Farber, 1984).

To overcome these difficulties, in 1989 an induction project was proposed, by Dr. Doron Mor, Director of the Training Division. The concept of an induction year took final form during the past decade, a period during which teacher training colleges were undergoing a process of academization, and strides were being made to establish teaching as a profession. In the last five years, induction programs have gained acceptance and now exist in about 40 colleges, parallel to the induction project.

Amir and Tamir (1992) constructed a model of major aims that should characterize a program for novice teachers, derived from various approaches and models of induction programs. The model set forth four objectives: improving teaching skills; integrating novice teachers into the school system; nurturing the teacher's personal development; and developing the teacher's professional thinking.

The objectives of the induction project, published in the Director-General's circular N.A. 1990/1, p. 22, were stated as follows: 1. assist novice teachers in the first year of their work, which is the most difficult. 2. increase the number of training institution graduates that apply for teaching jobs and to prevent their dropping out 3, improve training by applying the lessons learned from the year of induction.

Support programs for novice teachers now exist throughout the world and are an inseparable part of teacher training (Peleg 1998). Yet, some controversy is evidenced in the literature about which basic needs of teachers should be met in the induction process. Should emphasis be on teaching skills and on behavior development, or should it be on the development of personality, reflective thinking and personal growth (Orland 2000), or perhaps on all of these (Amir and Tamir 1992). This is because the professional literature relates to support programs as programs to advance and establish a profession (Feiman-Nemser et al., (1999); Report, Am. Fed. Of Teachers, 2000).

Pedagogical mentoring

The primary role in training novice teachers is that of the pedagogical mentor who mediates between theory and practice, assisting the beginning teacher acquire the skills needed to cope successfully with the range of activities entailed in actual teaching, providing supports for the novice's advancement and encouraging the mentee's personal and professional growth. The pedagogical mentor attempts to make the complex behaviors of teaching more effective and reduce or eliminate those that are ineffective (Cohn & Gellman 1988; Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999; Gold 1996; Orland 2001; Zahorik, 1988).

Models and styles

Many attempts have been made to create a structured model for methodical mentoring such as Goldhammer's (1980) and models of pedagogical mentoring according to the developmental approach (Cohn & Gellman 1988). According to these models, supervision is 'clinical' - that is, it derives its techniques from counseling.

The mentor's role is linked to planning, expectation, analysis, and improved classroom teaching of individuals and groups. The aim of 'training' within the various institutions and programs (college, university, induction project, internship) is to help the novice teacher function in the school. The aims and methods of mentors, however, vary.

According to Zahorik (1988) mentors can be divided into three *mentoring approaches* – based on their primary aims, which in turn dictate the mentor's mentoring technique: teaching techniques (behaviorism); adoption of educational beliefs and ideas (ideology); nurturing personal growth (human personality). Mentors whose aims were behavioristic, adopted a direct style, gave specific advice, criticized and explained; ideological aims led to an interpretative style that nurtured changes and activities. Mentors who supported personal growth, and whose activity focused mainly on personality development, posed questions for reflective thinking to the students, supported them and reacted. Zahorik found that while pedagogical mentors employed all three mentoring styles depending on the student's personality and his or her stage of development, one particular style was dominant in the case of each mentor.

According to Anderson & Shanon (1988) guidance and mentoring is comprised of *guidance activities* that include support by a person possessed with greater skills and experience, who teaches, responds, encourages, counsels and serves as a role model for a colleague who has less experience and fewer skills, in order to help the latter advance professionally and personally.

According to Burk (1991) the key role of the mentor is tied to *empowerment*. Pedagogical mentoring for novice teachers nurtures and develops their professional and affective skills while empowerment involves providing new teachers with psychological as well as technical resources, to help them discover the power (responsibility, authority) that they possess and can amass in order to make effective use of their powers in the future.(Neilson, 1991).

The researchers integrated elements of the *mentoring approaches* presented by Zahorik (1988), elements of *mentoring activities* presented by Anderson and Shannon (1988) and *elements of empowerment* presented by Burk (1991) in definition of the characteristics of pedagogical mentoring employed in this study.

Methodology

Data were collected and analyzed using mainly qualitative methods.

Population

The study followed the work of three independent pedagogical mentors, one from a university and two from a college of education, who mentored 49 novice teachers. All of the mentors had more than twenty years of experience in teaching and between ten to fifteen years in supervision, and have been mentoring novice teachers in an induction project for a period of four years.

Research tools:

The following tools were employed in the study:

1. Observations and tape recordings in group and personal guidance and supervision meetings, to identify and reveal the essence of guidance throughout the entire year (an explicit component).
2. A written questionnaire for pedagogical mentors after six months of follow-up to identify their style of mentoring and the nature of their supervision. The questionnaire contains both closed and open questions (a tacit component).
3. A reflective semi-structured interview with the pedagogical mentors to reveal their concepts and thoughts in relation to the mentoring style (a tacit component) at year's end. Each interview took between one to three hours.

All in all 35 transcripts were collected in the field lists, documenting 31 observations of group and personal mentoring meetings, and 4 transcribed tapes of personal mentoring meetings, each lasting two to four hours. Three questionnaires and three interviews.

4. In parallel, personal interviews were held with the novice teachers, following observations of their lessons, and closed questionnaires were administered to them at the beginning and end of the year (the findings are presented in another article).

Data analysis:

The data were analyzed using the content analysis method. The set of categories was based both on the theoretical framework (ETIC) and the studied phenomenon (EMIC) (Donmoyer, 1997; Zabar Ben-Yehoshua, 1990, 1996). Two "descriptive sentences" were formulated: one for the explicit component (actual mentoring behaviors, based on the transcripts), and one for the tacit component (thoughts and beliefs) of the pedagogical mentoring (based on the questionnaires and interviews).

Use was made here of the idea of "the mapping sentence," from Guttman's facets theory. The purpose of the mapping sentence is to classify the contents of the researched subject into independent content domains, known as "facets."

Content analysis was conducted on two levels: the level of episodes and the level of statements.

Validation

The findings of the content analysis were validated by the method known as "expert judgement" (Donmoyer, 1997; Zabar Ben-Yehoshua, 1990).

Findings

The findings were analyzed and summarized quantitatively and qualitatively. 296 episodes and 3,127 statements were found in the transcripts.

A. Three patterns for mentoring beginning teachers in the Induction Project emerged following classification of episodes and statements:

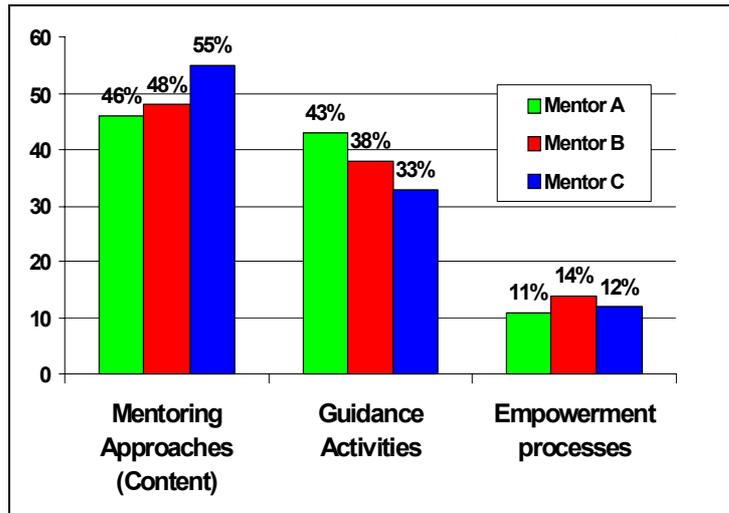
A group pattern – for novice teachers who are university graduates, including regular mentoring meetings in which problems were raised by the participants and suggestions for coping with objective and subjective difficulties were discussed, with guidance by the pedagogical mentor.

An individual pattern – for college graduates in the elementary school track. Here the pedagogical mentoring was personal, specific and focused.

A combined pattern (i.e. group and individual) for graduates of the preschool track in the college.

The mentoring included personal and group meetings. The group meetings served as a support group and as a forum for professional-personal development. The individual mentoring was characterized by accessibility and focused specific attention and nurturing. The participants in all the patterns of mentoring stated that the group setting is extremely important in their induction.

B. The findings obtained from an analysis of the mentor's statements in the three mentoring patterns revealed a grading of the mentoring components (Graph 1).



Graph 1 - Distribution of Mentors' Statements in Percentages by Mentoring Approaches (content) / Guidance Activities / Empowerment (N=3127)

In first place – a focus on the mentoring approaches that relate to the following aspects: teaching techniques, nurturing personal growth and educational ideas.

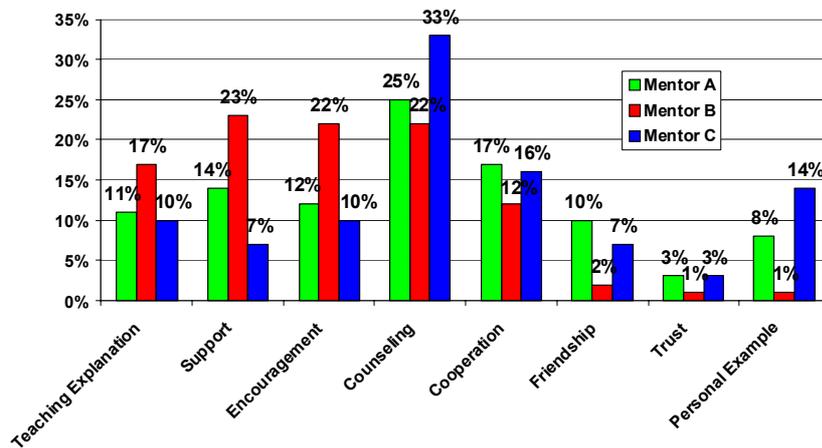
In second place – guidance activities: counseling, support, participation, encouraging, explaining/teaching, serving as a personal example, friendship and trust.

In third place – empowerment processes stressing authority and responsibility, instilling professional ability, stimulation, providing direction, meeting needs, development and reward.

C. The findings in relation to the nature of pedagogical mentoring show both similarity and variance between the mentors. The analysis shows considerable similarity despite the differences between mentors, populations of novice teachers and mentoring settings. Similarity was found in their perception of the role of a teacher as combining knowledge, the human being, art, and a reflective-practical profession. Most of the supervision programs are casual, not planned in advance. The basis of formal and informal communication is mutual trust. All three mentors have an indirect mentoring style, which encourages the participants in the induction program to engage in "joint thinking", in a process of self-reflection and self-coping.

The variance between pedagogical mentors was not consistent. For example, mentors B and C tended to adopt a clinical model of mentoring; mentor A, unlike mentors B and C, focused far more on reflection and on practical educational ideas; mentor B, unlike A and C, placed a stress on some of the guidance activities (Graph 2).

Graph 2: Distribution of statements of mentors according to guidance activities (%) (N=1231)



The following are several examples of interviews conducted with novice teachers in which the character of the pedagogical mentor is revealed in each mentoring pattern:

Mentor A in the group pattern: “She was a leader to us throughout the year; she was strong, supportive, encouraged us, enriched us with her experience and was our lifeline and someone to talk to”

“The group, our weekly meeting – **was the only place where I could say everything.**”

“I felt how I was ‘maturing’, gradually succeeding in managing by myself, with the help of mentoring and with the group.”

Mentor B in the individual pattern: “She helped me keep my head above water and kept me from drowning.”

“She succeeded in mirroring my problems and showed me how to cope.”

Mentor C in the combined pattern:

“Together with her I learned how to grit my teeth and survive.”

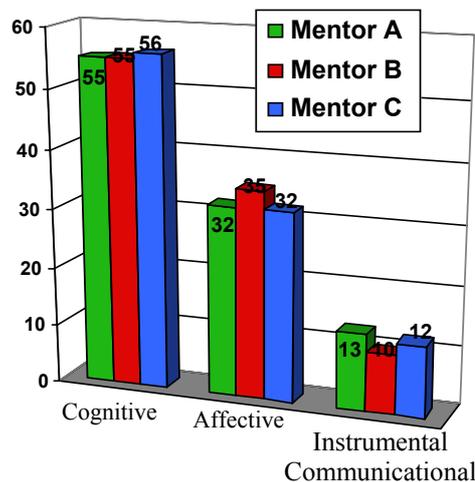
“She gave me the strength to overcome moments of professional crisis.”

“She was there for me and that was worth everything.”

D. Findings on the episode analysis of the three mentoring patterns revealed a uniform “body of authentic knowledge” (Graph 3 and Graph 4) in all three mentoring patterns: group, individual and combined. This finding indicates common components that were created in three independent frameworks by three different mentors and different teacher populations that teach different student populations.

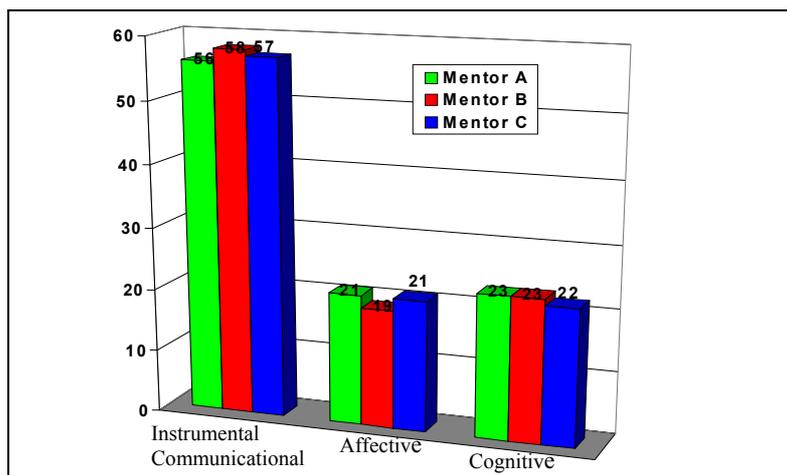
That body of knowledge structured by the interaction between pedagogical mentors and novice teachers in the induction setup constitutes a new practical pedagogical body of knowledge in addition to the training accumulated in real time during the discussions held between pedagogical mentors and novice teachers. For example, all groups dealt with survival and disciplinary problems, problems encountered with special students, dilemmas related to advancing good or weak students, principal-teacher relationships, parent-teacher relationships, relationships among staff members, school climate and reciprocal activities. This finding reflects a **“from practice to theory”** process and can serve as a skeletal syllabus for

Graph 3: Distribution of episodes according to the components of didactic knowledge (%) (N=133)



inductive and support programs, as well as a contribution to theoretical literature as a description of the connecting link between teacher training

Graph 4: Distribution of episodes according to components of self-knowledge (%) (N=163)



and practice. The practical involvement of pedagogical mentors and novice teachers in problem-solving processes mandates a significant degree of restructuring of classroom events. Learning through problem-solving processes constitutes a means for developing wide range learner skills which is, by definition, authentic learning (Graph 3, Graph 4).

Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

Mentoring patterns

The data collected in case studies provided detailed descriptions based on a wealth of behaviors manifested by the three mentors in the mentoring encounters, documented by ethnographic recording during the encounters.

The mentoring patterns (group, individual and combined), which were revealed during the study and were not known in advance, characterized three groups of three different independent mentors.

The composition of the mentored population was varied (university graduates vs. college graduates) as well as the student population they taught (junior and high school students vs. elementary and kindergarten children).

Findings on all three mentoring patterns indicate the advantages of the group encounter in addition to individual mentoring. The group encounters served as a support group and as a place for professional development through reflective professional mentoring that combines theoretical and practical ideas with learning from colleagues. On the other hand, the individual encounters were characterized by specific and focused treatment and the availability of individual mentoring. The literature describes the clinical model according to Goldhammer (1980) and the training program

outlined by Cohn & Gellman (1988) as appropriate for individual and group training. Gold (1966) underscores the individual support required by the novice teacher in comparison with others, like James (1996), who claim that group support facilitates the creation of strong points for the modification of cognition and affect which are more intense in the group.

Scale of mentoring components

Findings show that a list of priorities for mentoring components exists in all groups despite the difference between them; teaching skills (45%) are ranked first, and empowerment processes (15%) are ranked last.

In the professional literature, teaching skills are noted as bearing extreme importance and constitute a significant part of the pedagogical mentoring components, like Levine (1996), who claims that teaching techniques are the main component in building teachers' knowledge. Ralph (1994), Knowles & Cole (1996) and Pigge & Marso (1997) also emphasize the connection to "fieldwork", practice and practical experience in all contexts. This priority-related finding, which is revealed in pedagogical mentoring, bears both theoretical and applied importance in light of the difficulties facing novice teachers. The tendency to accept the environment and be "washed up" the system may turn into an element that inhibits the novice teacher's professional development (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). In view of the implications of findings related to the inferior place of reflective and empowerment processes in the mentoring process (despite the differences between groups), and the processes necessary for building a professional teacher with a broad, innovative and futuristic perception of his or her role, we recommend that the processes of reflection and empowerment should be broadened, emphasized, improved, designed and focused on the pedagogical mentoring of novice teachers.

The pedagogical mentor – the "improvising" professional

By comparing between the three mentors, similarities and differences can be underscored and generalizations can be made according to the cross-case analysis (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990). The main similarity was found in the covert component of pedagogical mentoring: role perception and indirect training style that leads induction program participants to "joint thinking" and to a process of personal reflection and coping (Odell, 1990). The body of authentic knowledge structured during the three mentors' mentoring encounters reveals unity.

The main difference between the mentors was related to the clinical mentoring model common to two mentors but not to the third. Each of the three showed different emphases in guidance activities (Graph 2). Variance was also found between them on subjects related to reflection and

applicable educational ideas (Graph 1) on both the overt (behavioral-performance) and covert components (thinking-ideational) of mentoring. The similarity and differences between the mentors on the various mentoring components can be explained as deriving from the collection of diverse conditions: types of mentoring patterns, role perception, novice teacher population, mentors' experience and education, etc.

An additional explanation can be found in the fact that they are professional mentors in teaching and training and as such possess improvisational skills. They were capable of modifying and changing according to needs and conditions, which is the meaning of improvisational teaching (Borko & Livingston, 1989).

Improvisational thinking requires mentors to compare information they receive from the environment with their own cognitive schemata and reach a prompt decision on whether this information is effective for choosing strategies, routines, theories or information from within the schemata. We offer this explanation with a reservation related to the small and diverse sample and the methodological difficulty of separating between specialization acquired over time and which is dependent on personal skills.

The self-evident recommendation for pedagogical mentors that results from the study's findings is that it is inadvisable to fixate on a preferred mentoring style or to strive towards uniformity since each style has its own advantages, and in the changing conditions of novice teachers' professional and personal development, and taking into account the variance between them and the multitude of contexts in which they operate, there is a preference for flexibility and adjustment.

Authentic knowledge

Findings on the episode analysis show homogeneity in the body of new knowledge created in the real interaction between pedagogical mentors and novice teachers. This knowledge is common to the pedagogical mentors and novice teachers in each of the groups. The 'authentic knowledge' concept adopted in this study can be explained on several counts. One is based on the sphere of literacy, qualitative methodology and the restructuring of new knowledge. Pedagogical mentoring encounters constitute a "professional discourse" that develops among people who deliberate, think and ask questions about what will happen later on. Clashes, dynamic contradictions and personal uniqueness were also present. 'Professional discourse' comprises events, context and interpretation as an assemblage (Shkedi, 1997; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Pedagogical mentors create coherency in the symposium they conduct with novice teachers, and a kind of conceptualization of chaotic

knowledge is achieved by appending abstract explanations to pieces of unrelated knowledge.

In the mentoring encounters, events are interpreted, positions are expressed and conceptualization is created. The process includes heightening awareness to subjects, while creating a cognitive, social and affective quality. Analysis of the events enables participants to form generalizations and 'theories' that constitute the new knowledge (Sarig, 1997).

An additional explanation of the construction of authentic knowledge can be based on Eraut (1994) who discusses the concept of knowledge that serves professionalism and teacher training. Creating new knowledge is achieved not only by the academic scholar but also by professionals in practice. Processing impressions, personal knowledge, interpretations that involve introduction to schemata of meaning take place in childhood and in the first formative years of a professional career, such as the building of knowledge by novice teachers in their interaction with pedagogical mentors.

In conclusion, 'authentic knowledge' is one of the important and unique findings of this study that underscores the similarity in content of various pedagogical mentoring patterns for novice teachers.

We recommend creating "case literature" from the body of knowledge taken from the life of the novice teacher, such as the dilemma of teacher-principal relationships, teacher-colleague relationships, and problems related to the special students. There is room to substantiate and extend this subject in additional studies on the various mentoring patterns, different mentors, different populations and different frameworks.

Consequently we can recommend a curriculum for training mentors for novice teachers. This curriculum should include skills of reflection and empowerment, guidance activities and "authentic knowledge".

Bibliography

- Amir, N. Tamir, P. (1992) Characteristic Needs, Ways and Emphases in the Induction Process. *Dapim 14*, pp. 76-84. [Hebrew]
- Anderson, E.M. & Shanon, A.L. (1988). Towards a conceptualization of mentoring. *Journal of Teacher Education 13*, 17-28.
- Borko, H. & Livingston, c. (1989) Cognition and improvisation: differences in mathematics instruction by expert and novice teachers. *American Educational Research Journal 26*(4), 473– 498.
- Burk, W. W. (1991). Leadership as empowering others. In: Srivastara. S. (Ed.) *Executive Power*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cohn, M. M. & Gelleman, V. C. (1988). Supervision: A developmental approach for fostering inquiry in preservice teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education 39*(2). 1-9.

- Connelly, F.M. & Clandinin, D.J. (1991) *Teacher as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience*. N. Y. Teachers College Press.
- Donmoyer, R. (1997) The Qualitative/Quantitative distinction. Paper presented at the *AERA Chicago*.
- Eraut, M. (1994) *Developing Professional Knowledge and Competence*. Flamer Press, London.
- Farber, B. A. (1984). Stress and burnout in suburban teachers. *Journal of Education Research* 77, 325 – 331.
- Feiman-Nemser s. Carver C, Schwille S, Yusko B, (1999). Beyond Support: Taking New Teachers As Learners in: Schere .M. (Ed). *A Better Beginning* Va. U. S. A. ASCD, pp. 3-13.
- Gold, Y. (1996). Beginning teacher support: attrition, mentoring and induction. In: Sikula, J., Buttery, T. J. Guyton, E. (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education A. T. E. MacMillan Library Reference, U. S. A., pp. 595 – 616*.
- Goldhammer, R. (1980). *Clinical Supervision: Special Methods for the Supervision of Teachers*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Guttman, L. (1957) Introduction to facet design and analysis, Proc. 15th Int congress of psychology, Amsterdam, pp. 130-152.
- Howe, K. & Eisenhart, M. (1990). Standards for qualitative (and quantitative) research: a prolegomenon. *Educational Research* 19(4) 2-9.
- James, P. (1996). Learning to reflect: a story of empowerment. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 12(1), 81-97.
- Knowles, J. G. & Cole, A. L. (1996) Developing practice through field experiences. In: Murray, F. B. (Ed.) *The Teacher Educator's Handbook* A. A. C. T. E., U. S. A., pp. 648-690.
- Levine, M. (1996) Educating teacher for restructured schools. In: Murray, F.B. (Ed.), *The Teacher Educator's Handbook* A.A.C.T.E., U.S.A. PP 620-647.
- Murnane, R. J., Singer, J. D. & Willet, J. B. (1998). The career path of teachers. *Educational Research* 17(6), 3-23.
- Neilson, E. h. (1991). Empowerment strategies: balancing authority and responsibility. In: Srivastara, S. (Ed.) *Executive Power*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Odell, S. J. (1990). Experienced teachers guiding novice teacher. In: Stoddart, T. (Ed.). *Perspectives on Guided Practice*. Pp. 33-43. East Lansing, MI: NCRTE, Michigan State University Press.
- Orland, L. (2000) Novice Teachers as Learners: Exploring Pedagogical Stories. *Curriculum and Teaching* 15 (1), 53-63.
- Orland, L. (2001) Realing a Mentorig Situation: one aspect of learning to mentor. *Taching and Teacher Education* 17 (1) 75-88.

- Peleg, R. (1998) *First Year of Teaching: The School and Novice Teacher Mentors*. PhD. The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. [Hebrew]
- Pigge, F. L. & Marso, R. N. (1997). A seven-year longitudinal multi – factor assessment of teaching concerns development through preparative and early years of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 13(2), 225 – 235.
- Ralph, E. G. (1994). Helping beginning teachers improve via contextual supervision. *Journal of Teacher Education* 45(5). 354 – 363.
- Report of the k- 16 Teacher Education (2000) *Building a Profession: Strengthening Teacher Preparation and Induction*. American Federation of Teachers.
- Reynolds. A. (1992). What is competent beginning teaching? A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research* 62, 1-35.
- Sarig, G. (1997). Professional Discourse and Research Discourse on Teacher Training. Lecture at *Seminar of the Mofet Institute*. [Hebrew]
- Shkedi, J. (1997) Constructing Knowledge in the Professional Discourse. Lecture at *Seminar conducted by the Mofet Institute*. [Hebrew]
- Zabar Ben-Yehoshua, N. (1990) *The Qualitative Research in Teaching and Learning*. Massada, Tel Aviv [Hebrew]
- Zabar Ben-Yehoshua, N. (1996) Kibbutz L.A. Am Oved Publishing Co., Tel Aviv, pp. 105-107; 149-179. [Hebrew]
- Zahorik, J. A. (1988). The observing-conferencing role of university supervisors. *Journal of Teacher Education* 39(20), 9-21.
- Zeichner, K. M. & Tabachnick, B. R. (1981). Are the effects of university teacher education washed out by school experience. *Journal of Teacher Education* 32(3), 7-11.

