The pedagogical instructor: Factors that predict students’ success.

Abstract: In the professional literature, pedagogical instruction is defined as an ongoing interpersonal process during which a skilled person (the pedagogical instructor) helps a less skilled person (the trainee) to develop the behavior and the professional identity of a teacher (Acherson and Gall, 1980). This research shows that the main factor influencing students’ success is the instructor’s professionalism, which must be supported by communication, empowerment, counseling, and feedback. These results have implications for pedagogical instructors’ specialization, and form the basis for constructing an efficient action program. Since professionalism is the only factor that directly predicts students’ achievements, it is important to raise the level of professionalism among pedagogical instructors, as well as to ensure that pedagogical instructors are skilled in communication, empowerment, counseling, and providing feedback.

**Introduction**

In all European and Anglo-Saxon countries, including Israel, there have been significant reforms in teacher training since 1990. The goal is to improve the quality of teachers and consequently the quality and scope of their students’ achievements. The lack of satisfaction in these countries with such training derives from social changes such as postmodernism, multiculturalism, exposure to media, rapid changes in knowledge bases, and globalization. In Israel, dissatisfaction with the level of the teachers and their teaching is further reinforced by poor student performance on both national (high school matriculation tests, Meytzav) and international tests (PISA, PIRL, and TIMSS). It is necessary to view the public pressure for change in a positive light, since the most important and influential reforms derive from these public discussions.

According to previous research, there are ten primary standards for teaching that should influence the setting of instructional tasks in teacher training programs (Amir and Vaknin, 1988):

1) Learner Development – the instructor understands how a community of learners grows and develops. He or she recognizes the fact that development varies individually within and across cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical dimensions.

2) Learning Differences – The teacher uses an understanding of individual and cultural differences in order to ensure success.

3) Learning Environments – The teacher supports collaborative learning and encourages social interaction and active engagement in learning.

4) Content Knowledge – The teacher understands the main concepts, tools and structures of the disciplines he or she teaches.

5) Application of Content – By connecting concepts and using different perspectives, the teacher encourages critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving.

6) Assessment – The teacher uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, and to monitor the learning progress.

7) Planning for Instruction – The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting different learning goals.

8) Instructional Strategies – The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students to develop deep understanding of content areas, and to create safe and productive learning environments that result in high levels of achievement.

9) Professional Learning and Ethical Practice – The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and constantly evaluates his or her practice. The teacher examines how his or her practice affects the students, and makes necessary alterations to meet the needs of each learner.

10) Leadership and Collaboration – the teacher defines appropriate leadership roles, and collaborates with students, other professionals, and community members in order to ensure the learners’ growth.

The pedagogical instructor plays a central role in the training of teachers, by bridging the theory and the practice of teaching. He or she creates a relationship with the students and coordinates between the formal studies of pedagogy covered in theoretical disciplinary courses and more practical activities, and directs students towards the development of professional skills and reflective self-evaluation (Ariav and Emanual, 2006; Burk, 1991; Cohn and Gellman, 1988). Likewise, he or she helps the students acquire the skills to cope successfully with a variety of activities, and encourages them in personal and professional growth, developing effective teaching behaviors, and reducing inefficient behaviors (De Jong, Korthagen, and Wubbles, 1996).

**Research Purpose**

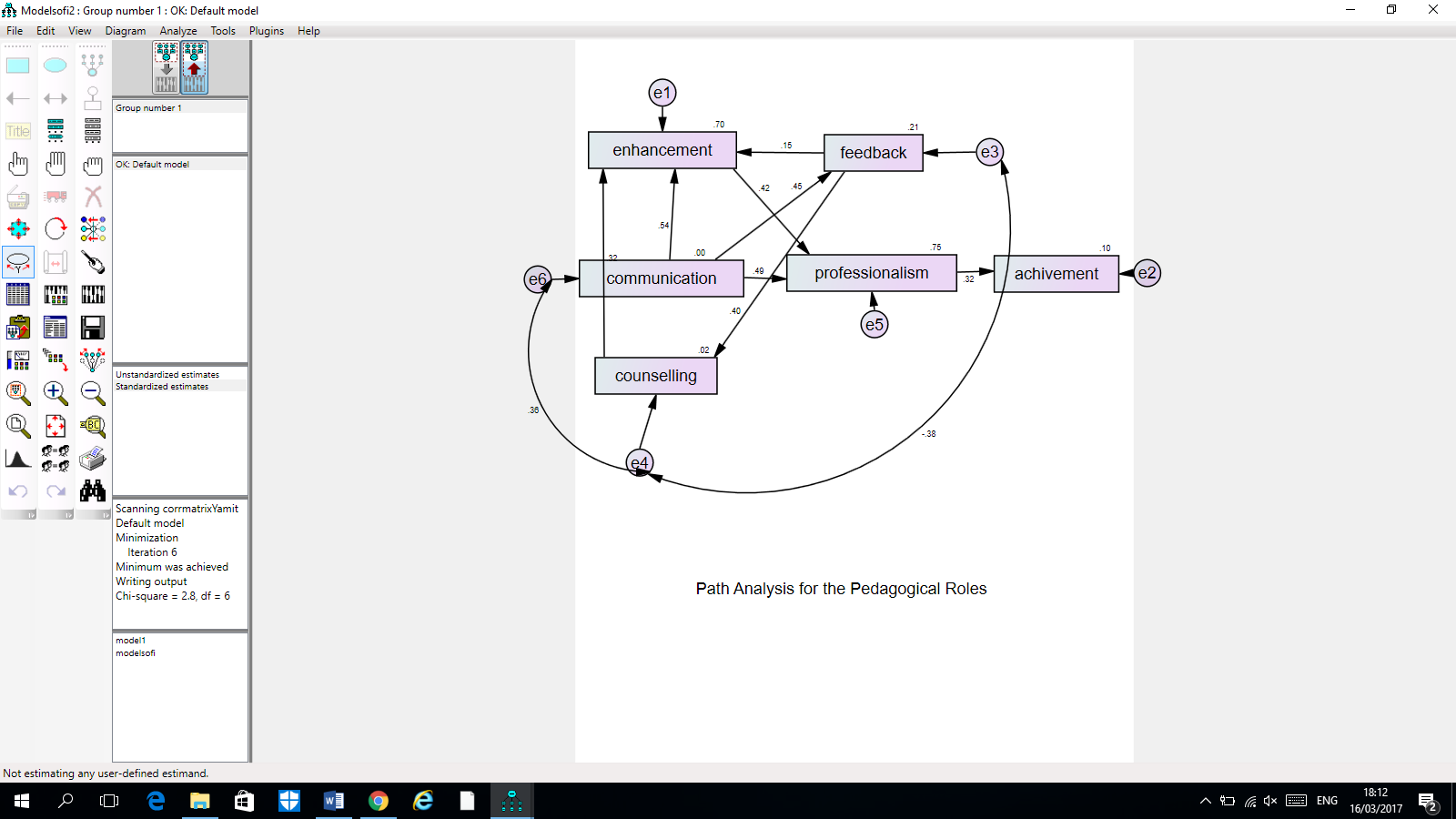
The goal of this research is to examine which factors had greater influence on students’ achievements in their third and last year of teacher training. Specifically, the analysis seeks to determine the main factor(s) which predict and influence success and how the other factors influence each other and support the main factor(s).

**Research Method**

To examine the relationships among the research variables and their relative importance, a path analysis was conducted as well as structural equation model analysis. The structural equation model is based on the research variables, and is designed to identify the factors and their outcomes in the researched field. The path analysis examines the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variables, while examining the influence of latent mediating variables. To examine the compatibility of the model, a chi-square test was performed with degrees of freedom equal to the difference between the number of known relationships and the number of unknown indices. A non-significant chi-square index confirms the assumption that this model fits with the empirical data, while a significant chi-square index shows no proof that the model is correct.

**Results**

Figure 1 shows the results of the path analysis.



*Figure 1*. Path analysis results.

Analysis of the model shows that the main factor predicting achievement in the practical work is professionalism (B=.32). However, the model also explains how two other factors significantly influence professionalism: enhancement of the students (B=.42) and communication with the students (B=.49). The enhancement factor is predicted by feedback (B=.15), communication (B=.54), and counseling (B=.32). In turn, counseling is influenced by feedback (B=.40) and feedback is influenced by communication (B=.45).

**Discussion**

The quantitative results enable us to determine which main factor predicts the achievements in the practical work, and how the other factors influence both the main factor and each other. Specifically, the pedagogical instructor’s role includes five main factors, each described below.

**Professionalism**

The pedagogical instructor takes part in the ideological development of the perception of training for teaching, the improvement of education and teaching in the field, the construction of an ideological infrastructure of the college–field partnership, and the outlining of an action path for the promotion of the partners involved (Dror, 2009). This work entails the management of an instrumental dialogue with all the partners– teaching students, mentors, school faculty, and peers– to find solutions to the problems that arise in the field. In addition, the pedagogical instructor must actively pursue the personal and professional growth of the students and the faculty of teachers, as well as his or her own personal development (Emanuel, 2005; Eraut and Hirsh, 2007). These processes require abilities, skills, and knowledge in a wide variety of areas, both traditional and modern.

Overall, the pedagogical instructor must be able to perform a diverse set of actions:

* Support the students, encourage the students to seek counseling from additional experts, observe the lessons, and provide feedback and guidance (Galbraith and Maslin-Ostrowski, 2000).
* Help the students integrate different types of knowledge: content knowledge, knowledge about teaching the content field, analysis of different situations, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical learner knowledge, knowledge of educational context, and knowledge of educational needs (Gold, 1996; Goodman, 1985).
* Take responsibility for building personal programs for the promotion of the students and for acting on both the macro and the micro levels. Pedagogical instructors form unique programs so as to provide diverse experiences in different learning environments, where different kinds of knowledge must be applied (Hoover, O’Shea, and Carroll, 1988).
* Acquire diverse types of knowledge (Irwin, 1997). The pedagogical instructor must keep up-to-date in the innovations in all pedagogical fields, as well as participate in different professional development circles in the framework of the respective communities of learners.

**Communication**

Communication constitutes a main and inseparable element in the preparation conversation and in the feedback conversation. Salomon (1987) claims that effective instruction depends more than anything else on good communication. According to Salomon, reciprocal dependence among people depends on the attribution of meanings and intentions to behaviors and events. The emphasis is on the way that the instructed party will use the lessons of the instruction (Korthagen and Russell, 1995). According to several studies, the instructor’s behavior is the main factor affecting instruction (Koster, Korthagen, and Wubbles, 1998; Meor and Eshel, 2001; Od-Cohen, 2004). These studies described an effective instructor as being interested in the guided person, as addressing the guided person’s emotions, as encouraging and respectful of different opinions, and as open, authentic, empathetic.

Od-Cohen (2004) found that the interpersonal dimensions of both instructors and individuals make an influential contribution to the quality of the instruction. These are expressed in all the role components. The weight of the interpersonal dimension is equivalent to that of disciplinary knowledge. Without good interpersonal relations between the instructor and the instructed person, this knowledge is not perceived as useful. Good communication is also essential in the organizational component. In the component of assessment, observation and feedback skills are necessary. In the component of assistance, trusting relations and the ability to display empathy are essential (Od-Cohen, 2004). These findings lead to the conclusion that interpersonal relations between the instructor and the instructed person are of great importance.

**Empowerment**

Burk (1991) claimed that empowerment is not a simple process. He defined five processes for empowering others: providing a direction, arousal (provoking new intellectual directions alongside cognitive and emotional ones), external rewards (praises and incentives), internal rewards, and development of and appeal to the followers’ needs.

**Advice**

The pedagogical instructor is supposed to help the guided individual find a solution to personal and interpersonal conflicts that can sabotage the learning process, to help in the development of the individual’s relations with the environment, to help develop skills of self-awareness and independent thinking, and to provide social and psychological support. This process may also influence the students’ ability to support future populations of students (Ross, 1990; Rubin, 1991; Russell, 1989; Salomon, 1987).

**Feedback**

The pedagogical instructor is required to provide feedback on the practical experience and learning processes of the instructed population, to strengthen the learners, to evaluate them critically and constructively, and to filter out candidates who are unsuited for teaching (Rubin, 1991; Salomon, 1987; Shulman, 1987; Stoddart, 1990). The guidance interactions between the instructor and the instructed are very diverse and can be divided into three main stages which are mutually reinforcing. The pre-active stage includes a preparatory conversation about the lesson that the instructed individual is about to perform. During the active stage the instructor observes the instructed individual, and he or she provides feedback during the post-active stage. This feedback is the core and main essence of the instructor’s guidance and coaching work (Wang and Odell, 2002; Yogev and Zozovsky, 2011; Zahorik, 1988).

The feedback conversation includes the educated interpretation of the different teaching situations that the instructor has observed and the instructed has performed. This conversation exposes the guided individual to educational-didactic events that occurred during the teaching. Reconstructing these events during the feedback conversation enables the guided individual to judge and control the experience while assessing the achievements of the performance, and enables him or her to make rational and ethical decisions (Goodman, 1995; Ross, 1987; Russell, 1989; Yogev and Zozovsky, 2011; Zilberstein, 2002, 2005).

**Recommendations**

Overall, tof practical studentthe pedagogical instructor’s Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize this factor and to improve it. The pedagogical instructor is a key figure in the teaching process, and in the transformation of the student into a beginning teacher who leads and manages a class that learns in an optimal manner. Surprisingly, the role of the pedagogical instructor does not require special training, though many training institutions establish high standards for candidates in this role. For the most part, only senior teachers who have succeeded in their work as expert teachers, and who have a master’s degree in education, are promoted to the role of a pedagogical instructor.

Based on the research findings, the authors make the following recommendations for identifying and enhancing pedagogical instructors:

1. Make pedagogical instructors the main target for empowerment by institutions who specialize in teacher training, and by supervisory bodies in the Academy and in the Ministry of Education.
2. Consider the profession of a pedagogical instructor like any other profession which requires specialization.
3. Upgrade the role of a pedagogical instructor to that of a pedagogical specialist.

Further analysis of the results enables us to delineate a map of the components that are required in order to improve the level of pedagogical instructors’ professionalism and specialization. As shown above, these components have a great impact on the professionalism of the pedagogical instructor. The specialization of pedagogical instructors must include the acquisition of professional instruments for the continuation of his or her growth and the professional development.

1. The component of teaching – the pedagogical instructor accompanies the student through the process of becoming a successful teacher and educator. Therefore, during the specialization studies of the pedagogical instructor it is vital to address what makes a teacher a good teacher, as well as how to improve the teaching process. It is also necessary for potential pedagogical instructors to get familiar with all the styles of instruction, instruction processes, and instruction models.
2. The component of communication –students are not only the population of the instructed people but also partners in a long, mutual journey. As the pedagogical instructor extends their relevant knowledge of theoretical and practical aspects of teaching, there are increased opportunities to facilitate correct communication, productive conversation and effective instruction for the personal cultivation of every student.
3. The component of empowerment – it is necessary to identify ways to empower the students and to increase their involvement in the learning process.
4. The component of counseling - The pedagogical instructor is called to fill the function of a supporter in the integration of the students’ studies. Therefore, it is important for the pedagogical instructor to be engaged in issues such as the characteristics of adult learners, the learning process itself, and the viewpoints of the instructors versus the viewpoints of the instructed regarding different topics and skills.
5. The component of feedback – feedback is an essential tool which helps the pedagogical instructor improve the students’ performance on each new instruction activity. The development of instruction abilities and feedback skills will help students from a reflective point of view.

As a result of this research, an ongoing action program in the training of student teachers will include lectures on the subject of professionalism and its importance as a predictor of future achievements, as well as on the need for the supportive factors discussed here: communication, empowerment, counseling, and feedback.

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