Considerations in running a virtual professional community as part of the effort to encourage reading

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In Israel, the engagement with promoting the love of reading is part of the ongoing activities of language classes in the primary school setting. For various reasons, language teachers are not trained to lead their students in discussions based on their reading as a tool to encourage reading (Burgess, Sargent & Smith, 2011**;** Hason, 2018).

This fact propelled Israel’s Ministry of Education to prepare an intervention program and to present teachers with pedagogic practices for the classroom that promote the encouragement of reading books. As part of this program, it was decided to open the first virtual professional knowledge community of its kind in Israel, with the goal of transforming language teachers into change agents with respect to promoting reading.

The expectation was that the advantages of the digital platform (Lev-On, 2015) would lead teachers to gain new knowledge and classroom-ready tools, and that the connection between the teacher, the book, and the student would be strengthened thereby.

At the end of the community engagement, the teachers were asked to respond to a survey. The results revealed the gap between the researchers’ perceptions of the success of the community, and the teachers’ own perspectives: while the researchers saw the community as not having achieved its goals, most of the teachers reported that the community activities changed their perspectives on their role in encouraging reading. Most were also able to respond with at least one classroom activity that they organized as a result of their participation in the community, and mentioned its clear influence on encouraging reading.

The article will paint a complete picture that will enable the naturalistic inclusion and improvement of other disciplinary communities as a tool for intervention in teaching and learning processes (Shlasky and Alpert, 2007).

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