**They stayed in the classroom: Narratives of outstanding student-teachers**

Introduction

A few years ago, as I began to be involved in teacher training, I was invited to lecture before an audience consisting of the heads of teacher colleges. At the time, I had just completed a study of teachers to ascertain to what they attributed their pedagogical professionalism. The findings of the study surprised me greatly, as none of the interviewed teachers claimed that their professionalism derived from their teacher-training institution. Moreover, their comments on their training indicated clear dissatisfaction with their professional preparation. However, I was surprised to notice that the college heads appeared very attentive, and after I completed the lecture, some of them approached me to tell me how appreciative they were of my talk. I was truly surprised by their reaction and dumbfounded by the fact that they openly accepted these discouraging conclusions, all the while carrying out a training policy that they themselves were convinced was clearly ineffective. Perusing professional journals has taught me that many scholars and practitioners engaging in teacher training present research evidence indicating the failure of teacher training programs. Surprisingly, many of them hold senior academic positions, and have themselves been instrumental in operating some teacher-training programs. How, then, can we explain the fact that despite their awareness, there is no indication of significant change in teacher training?

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher-training programs, two main criteria are commonly adopted. The first relates to the graduates' degree of satisfaction with the program. According to several studies, many graduates believe that their training programs did not adequately prepare them for the real world of teaching. The second criterion concerns the degree of perseverance in the teaching profession. Considerable research has taught us that almost half of teacher-training graduates leave the field within five years of having completed their studies. It seems, therefore, that more than providing an answer to the question of where and how teachers acquired their professionalism, we have clear evidence from teacher-training graduates regarding where they did *not* learn to be teachers.

The question of where and how the teachers obtained their professionalism remains open and awaits resolution. We also await an answer to the question of what will ensure that teacher-training graduates remain in the field as schoolteachers. These two questions comprise the research challenge that stands at the forefront of this book. This volume presents case studies following the first cohort class of the *Revivim* program, housed at the Hebrew University, where outstanding university students are trained as teachers This book tells the story of the program participants and examines the process of teacher training as they see it, using longitudinal, in-depth qualitative research methodology.

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A considerable number of studies have reviewed the stages of entry into the teaching profession and have presented a rather disappointing portrayal of the teacher-training process. Many other studies have described and analyzed particular elements of the teacher-training process. These studies, however, have mostly reported on isolated programs or projects. Some follow-up research extends to one or two years, with some rare three-year studies. What is needed, however, are not short-term descriptions of programs and initiatives. What is needed are longitudinal studies, following up the training programs––especially their participants and their graduates––for several years, perhaps for a decade. Surprisingly, we have not found longitudinal in-depth studies tracking the student-teachers from the stage of entering the training process until the completion of several years of work and growth.[[1]](#footnote-1) ).

In 2000, the Revivim program began operating at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, designed for students identified as outstanding, according to academic criteria. The program focused mainly on training Bible teachers, with the assumption that their training will lead to a significant enhancement of Bible teaching in public schools. The program offers an intensive four-year course of study, with students graduating with a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and a teaching certificate. The participants enjoy a generous stipend, are exempt from tuition, and in return, commit themselves to teach for at least five years following their graduation.

The first cohort of the Revivim program was accompanied by a longitudinal study that began with their enrollment into the program, through four years of training, and five years of working as regular schoolteachers, for a total of approximately nine years. This book will tell the story of the participants, especially the students, as they became teachers, but also will address teacher educators. The book will seek to present the picture of the student-teachers' pedagogical growth, from their first steps in training until they become professional teachers. With the program participants' help, I will seek to resolve the *mystery* of how teachers come into the world and what ensures their survival.

The study was conducted using the qualitative-constructivist research approach, which assumes that the description and explanation of the investigated phenomenon relies on the individuals participating in it, rather than assuming a single objective reality. The phenomenon to be examined is dynamic, changing, and dependent on time, place, and context. Therefore, the picture portrayed in this study is that which is reflected in the minds of the student-teachers who participated in the Revivim program.

The in-depth interviews allowed the participants to tell their story without being limited to pre-defined questions. The student-teachers were observed in their classrooms as teachers, using video technology. The collected videos were shared with the participants during the interview sessions. The observations were analyzed on the basis of the interviewees' own descriptions and explanations rather than being subject to externally prescribed categories. Screening the videos in the course of the interviews was intended to steer the participants to relate to actual teaching situations rather than settling for general descriptions. The analysis was carried out in stages, using Narralizer, a qualitative analysis software.

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While my name is attached to this book, and I take full responsibility for any mistakes, the book is a creation of many partners. The first thanks are due to the participants of the first cohort of the Revivim program. Almost all of them cooperated during all the years of the study. They were kind enough to allow themselves to be observed in their classrooms and found the time to meet with the researchers and offer their perceptions and their points of view. I would like to believe that not only we researchers benefited from their stories, but that they also benefited from the opportunity to tell their stories as a means of establishing their direction as teachers. While some of the participants were willing to have themselves quoted using their names and personal details, most names appearing in the book are fictitious, and we tried to conceal identifying information as much as possible. Most of the 21 participants took part in the entire study over several years. For technical reasons, some issues were investigated using a smaller number of participants.

Thanks are also due to many of the program's teachers: from the departments of the various disciplines, and the pedagogical supervisors, whose identities will not be divulged, all having added a valuable dimension to the study. At various stages of the program, the academic teachers were willing to be interviewed and to share their points of view. We also will not be revealing their identifying information.

I would like to thank the researchers who carried out the study as part of their master's or doctoral studies. First of all, Dr. Ori Katzin, who took on the project and faithfully carried out the task of coordinating the research. Ori was a partner in the research from beginning to end, and wrote both master's thesis and her doctoral dissertation in the framework of this study. Dr. Gilat Katz, Dr. Orly Ido, and Dr. Sylvia Sztyglic also prepared their master's theses and doctoral dissertations as part of this research. Dr. Liora Lev, Shoshi Bogosh, Noa Tal-Alon, Orly Yedid, Alona Yaish, Tami Sol, Judith Ofer, Keren Nuriel-Katz, and Michal Pundik all participated in the study and prepared either their doctoral dissertation or master's thesis on the basis of the research. I am also happy to thank Prof. Elite Olshtain and Prof. Yonatan Cohen, who supervised the doctoral students.

The book opens with a chapter focusing on the participants' motivation to join the program. The book continues with five sections. The first section, *Revivim's Program: Its Innovators Planners, and Teachers*, presents the perceptions of those responsible for planning and implementing the program; the second section, *A Teacher Comes to the World - How and When*? deals with the participants' perceptions and intentions as they entered the program. The third section, *Jumping into Cold Water*, describes the participants' knowledge and perceptions upon entering the teaching practice as student-teachers. The fourth section, *Evaluation of the Training Process*, presents the student-teachers’ evaluation of the various components of the program. The fifth and final section, *Toward Proper Teacher Training*, presents a picture of the conceptions and attitudes of the students-teachers as they approached the beginning of the tenth year after their entry into the program and addresses the extent of their inclination to remain in teaching. This section also offers an alternative route to teacher training that is inferred from the participants' stories. The final section of the book provides data gathered from the post-research period, as well as data derived from the other Revivim cohorts.

My hope is that the readers of this book will find it interesting and that the book will enrich our understanding of teacher training and contribute to its enhancement and its solidification in the field.

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**Chapter 1: Motivation for enrolling in the program**

On the bulletin board at the university was an announcement, one of many, with the heading: "Training program open to outstanding students." Appearing in smaller letters was the notice that "scholarships will be granted to suitable candidates..." Many students passed the bulletin board, most of them not noticing the announcement, some cast a glance at it, and only a few stopped to read it. It is unlikely that even those stopping in front of the bulletin board noticed the announcement for a special teacher-training program. Not so Orna. She was a student in the university's history department. Her choice to study history was not accidental. Orna had shown considerable interest in studying history and was certainly not looking to change her major. Still, something made her stop to look at this poster. Six words caught her attention: "Training program available to outstanding students."

What made Orna stop to read this advertisement, while others passed it by as if it weren't there? A closer look at Orna’s case reveals that issues of education and teaching were a part of her world. Over the course of several years, she had been a member of youth movements and even a youth counselor in various settings. During her army service, she also held training positions. However, she later indicated that what attracted her to teaching and the field of education was her older sister, who had worked as a teacher for ten years. "Her students always came to her after a few years, or came to me, and asked me to thank my sister..., it's very gratifying! So while she didn't see the fruits of her efforts immediately, she did see them later! She left a mark on people's lives! It's exciting to be appreciated by others."

The Revivim program directors' challenge was how to recruit qualified candidates while screening out inappropriate candidates. Actually, several academic programs' recruitment campaigns included slogans such as: "Five thousand dollars are waiting for you ...," or softer versions of the same idea. Although this program offered a very generous stipend and exemption from tuition, this was not the dominant element of the recruitment campaign. Program directors sought to appeal to young people who could be in some sense already close to the field of education and teaching, but for various reasons are reluctant to cross the threshold and enter.

In the absence of appealing details of the nature of the offered scholarship, it may be that the potential candidates' considerations were related more to their interest in education and less, and perhaps not at all, to financial considerations and material needs. Thus, the program directors had hoped, and apparently succeeded, in creating a high quality screening system appealing only to those for felt a deep commitment to the values of the teaching profession.

Orna stressed that she wanted to be a teacher. She felt that teaching would offer the best opportunity for her to fulfill her love of history. It may be that Orna's eyes fixed on the teacher-training program advertisement because in some ways she was already a teacher. Had Orna not already had at least one foot in the world of teaching, it is doubtful whether she would have seen the advertisement.

**In recent years, extensive efforts have been made to attract outstanding students for teacher-training programs. Various strategies have sought to encourage outstanding candidates to choose teaching in order to raise the professional status of the profession. These attempts are based on the common perception that there is a vicious circle, where teaching's low status deters the entry of quality candidates, thus further weakening teaching's prestige and status and as a result, attracting weaker candidates. Examples of attempts to improve the professionalism of teaching can be found in reforms that were instituted in the United States during the 1980s, which sought to promote the profession, recruit talented teachers, and fortify teaching personnel. These attempts to recruit the best and brightest candidates was bolstered in recent years through various training programs throughout the Western world that sought to attract high quality candidates to teaching.**

At the other end of the country, Naama received a phone call from a friend with a suggestion to enroll in a special teacher-training program. The friend enumerated the characteristics of the program and its benefits, its potential, and did not neglect to mention the generous stipend that came with the program. Although only 22, Naama, whose parents are lawyers, had already accumulated a rich experience in education. From the age of 10, she was a member and then a counselor in her youth movement. Then she was a member of a youth group living on a kibbutz. "My best experience was leading a seminar in my youth movement; I really enjoyed it, so I decided on my own that I want to work in schools. I love the direct contact with youth. I love non-formal education. But the real challenge is in schools, where we can meet everyone."

Naama was one of those young people who in many ways was close to education and to teaching, but probably needed some sort of a push to cross the threshold into the profession. Unlike Orna, Naama needed someone to present her with the idea of ​​enrolling in the program. It very well may be that she saw the advertisement, which had also appeared in the press, without paying any attention to it, as she naturally ignored many other advertisements. But when the phone call came, from a friend whose life's path was quite similar to her own, and when she heard about the other youth group members who had enrolled, it became easier for her to decide to join the program. The thought of being a Bible teacher and committing to so many years of teaching had not been a priority and perhaps never occurred to her as an option. "There is much that I was uncertain about, such as what I would want to teach, and there are lots of things that interest me. So I had a serious dilemma, deliberating between biology––I really love this field––life sciences, and the humanities; so I decided on the humanities, where I can acquire a broader education. On the other hand, I thought about biology being a more prestigious profession." Naama may have decided on a teaching career, unrelated to this program; however, would have been very difficult to imagine her as a Bible teacher.

About half of those accepted into the program, such as Orna and Naama, had considered the possibility of entering the teaching profession prior to hearing about the Revivim program. Rami, unlike them, was far from considering the possibility of being a teacher. Rami, like most of the men that enrolled in the program, expressly stated that without what Revivim offered, he would not have considered a teaching career. However, Rami also came with a very prolific history of educational experiences, especially in his youth movement, and during his army service. Upon completion of his military service, he worked in various youth settings as a teacher and especially as a social counselor. It was certainly unusual for a person so young––Rami being in his early twenties––to have such a rich background in such a broad area of ​​education. Nevertheless, Rami had not considered, even for a moment, to study teaching. "My knowledge of the nature of these places... my friend that studied education in the university or at a teachers ' college... and their impression of these institutions [was] that it [was] just awful." Thus, against all odds, the message regarding Revivim reached him, attracted him, and he was ready to seriously consider joining the program.

Ziva’s profile was not one that the program sought to recruit. Ziva had grown up in a moderate religiously observant home and had a religious school education. She was a member and counselor in a religious youth movement. The Revivim program was primarily instituted for non-religious young people and no special efforts were made to recruit religiously observant youth to join the program. Ziva heard about the program by chance. She believed that teaching non-religious pupils would provide her with a challenge. Ziva had no doubts that she would choose a career in education. "Certainly, there was a family factor that channeled me into education. I live at home, with both of my parents being teachers and principals; my older sister is also a teacher, and my second sister is involved in education as well; and the people around me have a very positive attitude regarding the field of education." Like Ziva, ten of the program participants have at least one parent working in education (teachers, administrators, supervisors, school counselors); four of the participants have both parents working in education.

**The features of teaching and choosing teaching as a profession was discussed in Dan Lortie’s book, which identified two factors that serve as motivators for teachers: *facilitator* factors and *attractor* factors. Lortie surveyed many teachers in the US and studied their life context. He found that one-third of the teachers had parents or relatives who were teachers and this influenced their professional choice, motivating them to enter the teaching field. Other factors, classified as attracting and expediting the choice to be a teacher, related to these individuals' previous experience. Many of those deciding to be teachers described the influence of their own teachers, viewing them as role models. Albek's study showed that students studying education or social work were more likely to be markedly influenced by their prior experience than were students in other fields. Gilat Katz examined the relationship between the Revivim participants' life experience as students, and their educational vision in their subsequent teaching role, concluding that experiences in their youth affected their views as teachers.[[2]](#footnote-2)**

Like Orna, Naama, Rami, and Ziva, 19 students, of the 24 that participated in the program, took part in youth movements, most of them as counselors, with many assuming key positions in these movements. Seven of them were active in providing social and educational services prior to their military duty. These pre-army experiences typically focused on youth and community work.

After their military service, 19 of the participants were actively engaged in education and social welfare in various settings. Nine of the 14 women served as teachers during their military service or during their national volunteer service. Not all of them had anticipated making teaching their life's profession, but these experiences moved them closer to the field of teaching. Consequently, 23 out of the 24 students had been engaged in teaching and education prior to joining the program.

While all the participants in the Revivim program had established significant links to education and teaching in general, the situation regarding the focus on Bible and teaching Bible turned out to be more complex. Orna, as noted, sought a specific focus on teaching history. A quarter of the program's participants said that had they not enrolled in the program, they would have chosen to study in other university departments, such as natural sciences, social sciences, arts, or law, but not necessarily the humanities, and certainly not in the Bible studies department.

It's impossible to tell how many people were exposed to the recruitment advertisements in the newspaper, or to the various university and college bulletin boards, or saw advertising on the Internet or received phone calls or emails and read them. It seems that only those who were already close to the world of education and teaching, and in some fashion were intrigued by Bible study, listened sympathetically to the possibility of submitting their candidacy to the program. In deliberating about the Revivim program, all of these candidates had to face critical decisions that would have implications on their lives for the next nine years, if not for longer. However, this was only the beginning of the process, and the decision whether to commit to the teaching profession would have to pass through several more phases.

# External motives for choosing teaching

As we have seen, the students who enrolled in the program had already taken some steps in the world of teaching and education. What would cause them to take the next step forward and decide to enter this world? It seems that several factors would be relevant, including their immediate environment, such as family and friends, their broader surroundings, and their more distant environment, such as their social and cultural background; all these can be considered factors in their deliberations of whether to step forward, or to step back.

Kfir grew up in a traditional home; his father spent several years teaching, and then retrained to business accounting. Kfir indicated that he did not receive a sincere backing from his parents regarding his professional decision. "Of course, they pressed me to become an accountant, to have someone to take over the office. There is nothing stimulating in studying bookkeeping. What was their response to my decision to study teaching? First of all, they said they welcomed it, saying, 'Whatever you decide, we're with you’ but I don't know what they really thought about it." Kfir believed that what his parents expected of him was that if he did not join the family firm, then at least he would learn something that could assure a good income. Of course, this was not ever stated explicitly. "I hate hearing this horrible sentence: 'Is this what really interests you?' with no continuation of the discussion; it's as if what is really behind their statement is: 'You should learn computer programming, make money.'"

Rami had a similar sense: "My mother did not want me to go there because there's no money in it." Orit, who maintains a religiously traditional lifestyle, though she grew up in a secular family, was aware of the fact that she was not satisfying her parents' exact wishes. "I don't know what goes on when my parents sit over coffee with their friends; what do they say? ‘My daughter is going to be a teacher?’ I imagine not. And when I met our neighbor, whom we've known since I was a baby, he asked: 'So you're not planning to join your father's business after all? ' I tell him, 'No. Listen, other ideas are important for me now'; he is very nice man, and says, 'but that is not what is expected of you’.”

There were others who mentioned the doubts and reservations they were hearing from others–– not so much about having chosen the teaching profession, but the choice to study and teach Bible. Hila, who had a very unpleasant high school experience, said: "I'll never forget how my friends just laughed at me when they heard I was going to study Bible. ‘You've never attended a synagogue!' They do not understand what I am doing in this program." Among the religiously observant participants were those that mentioned that they had heard doubts expressed about the idea of ​​studying Bible at secular university rather than at a religious institution.

However, despite the doubts voiced here and there, the majority of those joining the program indicated that they had the support of their families. Orit said: "My husband thinks this is a great calling." Naama indicated the positive response of her parents to the fact that "it's the Bible. My mother was very excited, and she really liked the idea; also, my father was positive about my choice. They're very enthusiastic."

Even Kfir, whose parents had wanted to see him take over the family accounting firm, or consider a field in high-tech, said his parents supported him. "They have tried for years to bring me closer to religious tradition, and they think that thanks to their efforts, I will be studying Bible, and they can be happy about that."

The participants' friends have offered similar kinds of support. "Most of the people around me are really happy for me, appreciating the program's educational value. In general, people have expressed a very positive attitude to the idea of ​​the program, the principles behind it; they see it as something very important" (Ziva). Their friends were very impressed because this is an outstanding program for which participants receive a generous stipend. "When I tell them that I receive money for my studies, even though I just study Bible, they look at me differently, and that's good for me, as I proved something to them " (Orna). Rami is somewhat skeptical about how sincere is his friends' encouragement. "I believe it's not a completely sincere expression of appreciation, they say it just to make me feel good..."

**There are many factors that characterize external motives influencing the decision to enroll in a teacher-training program. Many studies conducted in the last 30 years have distinguished between external and internal motivating factors. External motivation factors for choosing any profession are defined as those related to aspects not necessarily connected to the essence of the profession. They comprise material rewards and a sense of economic and social security, such as salary, working conditions, social and other benefits. External motives also include social rewards, such as the prestige and recognition in the profession, its autonomy, and attitudes of family and friends.**

**The lack of extrinsic rewards, especially an inadequate salary and no opportunities for advancement, can be cause for dissatisfaction among practitioners. Since teaching is seen mostly as a social service profession, a focus on material rewards is not commonly viewed as a legitimate concern. Conversely the attraction of benefits, such as according external prestige (e.g., academic degrees) are perceived as legitimate and may lure new applicants to join the profession.**

**The studies found that teachers coming from a high socioeconomic background related to teaching as a low-prestige profession and did not anticipate material rewards. In contrast, teachers coming from lower socioeconomic levels related to teaching as a profession that bestows social mobility as well as material benefits. Consequently, typical teacher-training applicants are characterized by relatively middle-low socioeconomic levels, while individuals from higher socioeconomic levels tend to turn to alternative, more prestigious professional paths. It appears, then, that the teaching profession is not an attraction for high level population groups characterized by rich academic backgrounds. These findings pose a challenge to many teacher-training programs. The Revivim program, seeking to attract candidates with high academic credentials, is indeed trying to meet this challenge.**

Despite the fact that the program's participants are required to commit to teaching as a profession for an extended period of time––for at least nine years–– none of those enrolling in the program were speaking at this point about the material rewards (or lack thereof) in the teaching profession. Could this be because material rewards appear so distant from the perspective of first-year students? Does the fact that the program's participants, most of whom came from relatively high socioeconomic level homes made the consideration of material rewards less central? Or is the prospect of material rewards so poor that it is futile to discuss it, at least for now. The issue of extrinsic consideration will reappear and will engage the participants in later years, as they approach the conclusion of the program and even more in their career as full-fledged teachers. This issue will be addressed at length in Chapter 14.

**"Are we really outstanding?"**

The Revivim program set out to recruit only high quality candidates, in keeping with qualifications required by the most prestigious university departments. Nevertheless, among the participants, we found some accepting and some rejecting being classified as 'outstanding.'[[3]](#footnote-3) Those accepting being called 'outstanding' did not necessarily do so because of their high self-esteem, but saw it as a challenge to which to strive. "The expectation level here is so high that you are constantly busy trying not to disappoint people. You're constantly under review. It seems to me very frightening not to meet these expectations" (Ziva). Some of the participants didn’t see themselves as particularly outstanding, but were impressed by the high level of their colleagues. "I really feel I'm enriched by the people around me, even to a greater extent than my actual studies. Speaking to colleagues, I see that they all have amazing world views; they stimulate me to think of new things." Other participants felt that the 'outstanding' label may help enhance the image of the teaching profession in the eyes of the teachers themselves as well as in the eyes of the public.

However, the dominant tone seems to reflect a reluctance to adopt the ‘outstanding’ moniker: "I am not saying that it's an outstanding program (giggles). This is a program for those who really want to become teachers. We are not outstanding in anything. I'm referring to myself. Outstanding? Come on! They use the term to attract candidates, but it is very daunting" (Orna). Shira preferred to emphasize the participants’ quality of caring and not their being ‘outstanding.’ Shira, like many others in the program, grew up with a mother involved in education. She had some teaching experience during her military service. "It annoys me. I mean, if people come here to boost their ego, then more power to them. But this is not a program for outstanding students or teachers. Many people are much more outstanding than I am. " Thus, some participants viewed this as an unrealistic marketing ploy, common to university programs.

Some participants challenged the notion that typical standards for excellence for university candidates–– matriculation grades and psychometric tests––can be predictive of success in teaching and excellence in education. Asaf said: "To me, this is a negative definition. So beyond the social criticism, this kind of elitism, getting a high score on the psychometric exam, is not evaluating what is needed for a social-educational program." Asaf grew up in a socially conscious family and was thus sent by his parents to a school that highlighted social values. From an early age, Asaf was involved in educational activities as a member and a leader in a youth movement. After graduating from high school and before his army enlistment, Asaf remained in his northern peripheral town to engage in social service and educational activity. After completing his army service, Asaf returned to the town and worked with at-risk children and teenagers. Thus, Asaf's personal background could help explain much of his outlook and his decisions.

As we shall see in Chapters Two and Three, the founders and teachers of the program did not consider the use of the “outstanding" label as a marketing ploy, but truly believed that the key to improving teaching and schools lies in the training of outstanding student-teachers, with the concept of 'outstanding' being determined by generally accepted academic standards.

**"Do we deserve a scholarship?"**

The scholarship that included exemption from tuition fees and a monthly living allowance of about $1000 provoked controversy among the participants. Most of them expressed some discomfort regarding the scholarship. Naama, like most of Revivim's participants, grew up in a financially comfortable home said that "I would have applied even without a scholarship. If it's a good program, it's important. It is very exciting. It’s not pleasant to receive money as a gift. I grew up on basic work values." Vered, on the other hand, does not hide the fact that the scholarship offer played a significant role in her considerations of whether to apply to the program. "If I had to earn this money on my own, even half of it, along with university studies, I would have had to work many hours. Money was clearly a factor in my decision, but it was not just for the money. I wouldn't have even considered going for a MA degree without Revivim's offer. I don’t think it's something to be ashamed of."

Program participants learn quickly that the program is so intensive that it doesn’t allow for holding down even a part time job: "It is impossible to both work and participate in all the required academic courses" (Hila). The fact that the program does not leave them much free time beyond studying provides a justification for those who were uncomfortable receiving such a scholarship. "I wanted this program; I did not want this program's money. And I understand they have to buy our time, since we really have no time for other things"(Orna). It is notable that as part of the guidelines for acceptance into the program and receiving the scholarship, the participants were asked to sign a pledge to repay the grants if they were to drop out of the program or if they were to back down from the commitment to work as a teacher for five full years after graduation.

In this context, it should be noted that most of those who enrolled in the program did not find it problematic to undertake this nine-year commitment of studying and working. However, from the perspective of young students, a nine-year commitment seems substantial. Kfir explained, "In one fashion or another, this would have been close to my career track––studying education and teaching––even without Revivim. Teaching is the field I chose, as something I want to do in my life. One person may want to be a pilot; I want to be a teacher. "

**Studying in a unique group**

The participants of the Revivim program are a unique group, separate from the other students in the Faculty of Humanities and in the School of Education. Indeed, while much of the coursework is taken within the framework of the general Bible department requirements along with other humanities students the Revivim students’ comprise a prominent presence in these courses: for some regular humanities courses, they comprise the majority. In addition, about one-third of the courses are exclusive to Revivim students. These include all education courses, and several specialized courses in Bible.

The students maintain close contact with each other for a considerable number of weekly hours, and often join their colleagues for various class projects. Given the evolving nature of the prominent group-study phenomenon, it is unlikely that the program directors anticipated that this unique group character would be a selling point for the program candidates. Over the years, it has become apparent that the peer group is a significant factor in the process of studying, training, and teaching. This issue will be discussed more comprehensively in the following chapters.

Most of the participants related positively to their affiliation with such a unique group and only a few expressed some reservations regarding the centrality of the group. Orit, who had already completed one year of study in a regular university department, has already tasted the experience of being "one more anonymous student at the university" and sought an alternative for herself. "I had always told myself that I didn't want to go to university in the regular format, being one more student out of 300. So I sought out all sorts of informal learning frameworks, something different," until she finally came across Revivim, recognizing that she had found the different kind of study atmosphere she was seeking.

Many candidates perceive the Revivim group as a framework facilitating joint study, creation, and collaborative thinking. Asaf confirms these ideas precisely; for him, the group is not only a framework, but also a way of life. "We are a group, and it is important to take advantage of this opportunity. We have a common responsibility and the aim of our common discourse not just to contribute to each other; we're trying to establish a culture. I think that the direction here should be to focus on establishing a real group, which includes all team members as well as the faculty. All of us should work together as a team."

There are also concerns and reservations. Orna's concerns are quite high; thus the group factor served as a negative motivational factor. "I'm afraid of the group dynamics; I'm afraid that it will turn into a high school. It's my biggest fear, that I won't find my place here. I almost didn't come to the program because of the group." While Hila was actually pleased with the program after the first few weeks, her concerns did not wane. "I think there's a lot of cooperation and mutual help, and it is important to continue giving the best of each of us. I also hope to avoid a competitive climate." The group framework also prompted a sense of fruitful mutual dependence. The first days of the program resulted in Shira becoming enthusiastic about of the group's potential, but also highlighted her concern for its future. "My concern is that people will start to leave, then I'll find myself on a sinking ship, which represents to me an important vision that I feel part of. I find myself running between colleagues to make sure everything is fine with them. I worry about this group.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

# Internal motivations - the desire for self-fulfillment

Benny, like many members of the program came from a family whose parents were involved in education. He was a member and counselor in his youth movement and worked as a teacher for the year in a peripheral town prior to his army conscription. His decision to join the program is the outcome of deliberating between choosing to study art or teaching. Finally, he found that teaching will better fulfill his artistic talents. "I don't think I could do better than being a teacher. I feel that this is the right way to express my talents and my creative bent. It pushed the artist in me to deal with his craft; it is as if I am practicing the highest form of art: shaping people." It appears that the decision of each of those joining the program was encouraged by the sense that teaching would provide an opportunity for self-expression and perhaps even full actualization of their personal talents. Kfir argued that his desire to have contact with people is what will enable a full expression of his personality. "First of all, teaching is one of the only professions in which you are in contact with people. You are not at a computer; you are not in a closed room. It means working with people, something different. More humane. And that's what suits me." Some emphasize that the work with children that grants them a sense of self-fulfillment. "When I finish a good lesson, a good conversation with the students, I feel like I've exhausted myself; I gave something I am able to give. It is important to choose a profession where you feel good with what you're doing" (Vered). This sense of joy and fulfillment is based on their past experience, especially deriving from their roles as counselors in their youth movements.

We were given the impression that among the internal motivation factors, the desire for self-fulfillment was the most prominent motif in the decision to choose teaching as a profession for life.

**A similar picture to that presented by the Revivim participants emerges from studies carried out around the world. Thus, internal motivation factors are the most prominent motivators for choosing teaching as a career. Many studies have found, just as we have, that professional involvement with children and youth has led many to decide on the teaching profession. Many describe themselves as loving children specifically and people in general, seek to work in a field that engages them in interpersonal contact. Another essential feature of teaching is service to the individual and to the community, thus reflecting a choice motivated by the desire to give to others. Involvement with and interest in the subject matter is also a key characteristic of teachers in secondary schools. These three factors––self-fulfillment, interaction with children, and interest in the subject matter––appear to grant a sense of satisfaction with their professional decision.**

**The need for self-fulfillment appears as the highest source of motivation in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow prioritized persons' basic needs as beginning with the basic physical requirements of food and shelter, followed by security needs, and social needs (such as the need to belong and to be loved). The highest ranking needs are the cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, and the need for fulfillment and self-actualization. Maslow argued that all human action is nothing more than individuals' efforts to advance up the hierarchy of needs, toward satisfying the need for self-fulfillment or self-actualization, which is the desire of individuals to actualize their potential. While researchers and many empirical studies have not fully substantiated Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there is no dispute regarding the contribution of Maslow's theory of motivation in acknowledging the importance of self-fulfillment.**

The internal motives to engage in teaching, including the desire to achieve self-fulfillment, are pitted against external factors, which often comprise a force that distances individuals from teaching. Thus, the participants had to have a deep conviction to embrace their priority for self-fulfillment as the factor superseding possibly negative external motives. "Well ... I do not expect that in social events in about ten years, I'll say, 'Yes I am a Bible teacher,' and everyone will exclaim:' Wow!!! Bible teacher! How did you ever manage to do that? 'It's okay, because to me, what's important is what I am doing, it's how I feel about it, and I feel good about it. Because of the challenge, it's something that is significant for me." In the span between the external and internal motives for teaching, it becomes very clear that the internal motives are the main factor for joining the program. In fact, the participants' strong emphasis on internal motivations can be seen as a rather optimistic portrayal as they view their future as teachers.

**Some argue that extrinsic rewards can transform an interesting task into boring work. People with internal motivation are usually more satisfied with their work than peers who are more interested in external rewards. While an intense focus on external rewards can provide quick results, people motivated by internal factors can work hard and persevere despite arising difficulties, due to their inner desire to control their lives, to learn about the world, and to achieve something worthwhile for the long term. Some studies have found that the secret to high performance is not an external imposition of reward or punishment, but our deep desire to direct our own life and to expand our capacity to live for a worthy purpose.**

**Research has indicated that the professional commitment of teachers who are more motivated by internal factors is greater than that of teachers whose motivation is tied more to external factors. The individual's internal compensation is often delayed or even dependent upon the belief that fruits of efforts in the field of educational will ensue mostly at some point in the future. Sometimes this 'compensation' is reflected with pride on the success of an individual student, at times this is reflected with the satisfaction that comes from hearing of graduates' achievements long after having left the school. Do factors such as contributing to society, concern for others, and a sense of mission comprise, according to Revivim participants, the sense of self-fulfillment that ultimately explains the choice of a career in teaching? Many researchers have posed this question. Some believe that personality traits are the source of the attraction to the field of teaching, beyond the noted desire for self-fulfillment, satisfaction, and pleasure derived from teaching.**

**Is it desirable to be a teacher?**

It is hard to imagine what goes through the minds of those considering choosing teaching as their profession. It is even more difficult to imagine what goes through the minds of those to whom the university had offered almost unlimited opportunities in the institution's most prestigious departments, as was the case for most of the Revivim participants. In their willingness to consider teaching as their life's profession, these students likely responded to an amalgam of emotional and rational motives, both conscious and unconscious. Seeking to access the deepest motivations of the participants, we conducted in-depth interviews, allowing each participant to tell their stories without the constraints of structured and mandatory questions, so that all the participants would be able to express their reflections during the interviews and to clarify for themselves several issues of which they may not have been fully cognizant.

The prominent motif in the interviews, expressed by all the participants, was the uncompromising desire to contribute. "It's really the belief in education, the belief in our mission, and the need for good teachers. I am doing what is important to be doing. I do not succumb to the ego in me. I feel that what drives me here it is just being a full human being; I mean I would feel very badly about myself if I was not able to contribute" (Shira). Is Shira describing an internal motivation here? It indeed sounds close to internal motivation. However, it is common to view internal motivation as an expression of reward and satisfaction derived from the essence of the occupation. It seems that the factors raised by Shira are beyond a personal reward in the immediate sense, as she said: "I do not succumb to the ego in me." Expressing a similar view, Ziva says clearly: "I really believe in education, I see it as a life's mission, I see it as a challenge; it is important for the building of a state, a nation, and society." Ziva is not talking about building her own self, but building the state and society. Rami added: "This is something I consider to be a life's mission. This is something I consider a duty. This is something I consider to be very important. This is something I also want to change! It helps to build a life."

**To explain such motives, Mordechai Nissan has suggested another motivation factor, in addition to the internal and external motivators, which he calls "the desirable perception." This desirable perception reflects a situation in which a person is faced with an internal injunction, or at least an internal prompt, to engage in a certain behavior because he feels it is the proper thing to do, and not because it is rewarding. Considerations of desirable perception are based on the individual's belief that a particular activity or situation is good and desirable, and the person feels that he or she ought to act, even if the action conflicts with expediency. Being aware of there being a *proper* behavior presses the individual to perform that behavior. Behavior based on desirable conception, however, can also be explained as serving personal interests, such as avoiding empathic distress, satisfying the need for altruism, and the like. Nonetheless, sometimes the behavior derived from desirable perception entails giving up on pleasure, or even causing hardship.**

People's identities are shaped by the way they see themselves and by how others see them, or rather how they perceive how others see them. As such, it was almost to be expected that the program participants would relate to the status of teachers and try to imagine themselves through this lens, and perhaps even influence them in evaluating their own status, either positively or negatively. Nevertheless, it seems that according these participants, their desirable perception motivation overcame society's negative perception of the teaching profession. Orna: "I chose teaching precisely because of that. I mean ... It doesn't bother me that people disparage my profession as long as I execute it in the best possible way. And maybe if I do it well, and two or three or four more do it well, then we've accomplished something!" Orna stresses her desire to instigate a real change in Israeli society, no less. The belief in the power of teachers to influence and to change reality characterizes all those who participated in the program. "I have something to say, and I can try just a bit, to help form the next generation" (Vered)." Vered, religious in her way of life and her faith, emphasized the need for eradicating illiteracy and creating a dialogue between secular and religious citizens. She, like other religious members in the program, does not see herself as an agent of faith, certainly not to impart her values on others. She would like to see herself as a bridge to stimulate real and substantial dialogue.

I read the comments of the program's participants and try to recall, from a distance of more than a generation, whether my colleagues and I were also motivated by the desirable perception. I am certain that beyond a doubt, I imagined a different kind of classroom and a different kind of school than were prevalent then, and I also hope that I managed to accomplish some of these dreams in the course of my life as a teacher. But did I really believe, like those in Revivim, that my teaching would actually engender societal and cultural change? Like them, I studied in an exclusive program. Many of my colleagues and I were carefully selected by unique communities (such as an Israeli Kibbutz) to be educators for the next generation. And yet, I do not remember our discourse centering on changing society and culture. Perhaps skeptics or cynics would say that reality has erased these initial aspirations from my memory. Many say that as the years pass, the generations 'diminish.' However, if we go by the thoughts and visions of the participants in this program, we need not worry or despair.

Skeptical readers will read the participants' words and say to themselves 'All this is just talk'; sounds like false altruism. It can't be that these top students who had the prerogative of studying at almost any prestigious university department would prefer to sacrifice their future to study teaching. Ultimately, the skeptic will say, everyone calculates their costs and benefits, choosing teaching only if this will maximize their benefit, whether external or internal, as reported in the academic literature on motivation.

**Recently, a number of evolutionary and neuroscientist researchers have begun to examine altruistic motivation, and their findings reinforce the credibility of the discourse of those who joined the Revivim program and the validity of the arguments offered by Nissan regarding 'desirable conception.' These researchers have argued that the principles of evolution imbue within us the need and desire to be socially active and to contribute to others, no less than the need to be selfish and utilitarian. Sympathy, thoughtfulness, and helping others are instinctive. They exist side by side with aggression, suspicion, and selfishness, which are all part of our original biological nature. The roots of altruistic behavior are embedded in human nature, so that people are not only driven to help others, but also feel it is worthwhile for them to do so, thus generating positive sensations. Thus, good deeds for the sake of others make us feel good. It would appear, then, that moral urges like these were created first, with the formulation of moral principles coming only later. Furthermore, research has found that the reward centers of human brains' neural activity were recorded as being more active while performing altruistic deeds, than when they were given a financial reward. The motivation of *desirable******perception* (altruism) would then appear to be the key to the success of the human race.**

# Conclusion

In this chapter we implied that the process of becoming a teacher begins many years before the actual decision is made to enter a teacher-training program. It is a process rooted in the life of each person, comprised of some motivational elements which are conscious, with others likely beyond awareness. It is not clear whether all the statements of the program participants indeed reflect their full motives or whether some of the statements are a rationalization of decisions powered by unconscious, intuitive processes. The journey of a teacher coming into the world begins long before the participants decided to enter the program and the teaching world. The decision moves through several screening filters in the form of external motives, internal motives, benefits and cost, perceptions of what is desirable or undesirable, feelings and understandings. All of these are intertwined in a cycle of decision making. We cannot determine which motivational factors were dominant for each of the participants. It seems to us, though, that external motives, though they played a role, did not comprise the key factor. It also seems to us that those candidates who did not view teaching and education as a valued endeavor ultimately decided not to enroll in the program. It appears that the concept of teaching and education as a value-laden field is the 'fuel' that preserves the motivation of each of those in the program. However, it can be concluded that the desire for self-fulfillment is the ultimate factor in deciding whether to join the program and choose teaching or shunning it. Those believing that teaching would not accord them a sense of self-fulfillment would not ultimately enter the field, even if they value the profession. Given the above, we may also assume that if teachers sense during their working years that teaching no longer offers them a sense of self-fulfillment, their career will be cut short.

We have seen that those who joined the program did not do so at random. They already had one leg in the world of teaching and education, and required just a little push to take the next step and commit themselves to the program. Once accepted, the participants moved through an arduous process of training and subsequent entry to actual teaching. Do they bring with them only their good will and the motivation that guided the decision to join the program? Or did the fact that they already saw themselves as a partial member of the teaching profession reflect a world of perceptions and beliefs about teaching and about their future performance as educators. Some of that has already been hinted at in their discourse in the present chapter. The following chapters will reveal a clearer picture.

1. Our reference is not to studies based on a series of questionnaires given to participants and to graduates year after year, but to studies based on in-depth descriptions of the investigated phenomena. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Katz (2003) A detailed reference to the findings of this study is presented in Chapters 4 and 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The expression "excellence" refers primarily to academic excellence, that is, to the scores/grades in school and psychometric tests. It does not connote that they are pedagogically outstanding, a figure that cannot be measured, at least not before they become actual teachers. Their status as being pedagogically outstanding, if it is addressed, is the result of the impression the candidate made in the interview prior to being accepted to the program. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Chapter 11 deals with the role of the group from the perspective of the participants. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)