The Pedagogical Instructor: Factors which predict students' success.

Abstract: In professional literature, pedagogical instruction is defined as an ongoing interpersonal process during which the skilled person (the pedagogical instructor) helps the less skilled person (the trainee) to develop the behavior and the professional identity of a teacher [1] This research shows that the main factor which influences the students' success is the instructor's professionalism, which must be supported by the following factors: communication, empowerment, counseling, and feedback. These results have implications for pedagogical instructors' specialization and forms a basis for constructing an efficient action program. Since the factor of professionalism is the only factor that directly predicts the students' achievements, it is important to raise the level of professionalism among pedagogical instructors as well as to ensure that the pedagogical instructors possess the following skills: good communication, empowerment, counseling, and the ability to provide feedback.

INTRODUCTION

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

There are ten functions which are reflected as standards for teaching that influence the setting of instructional tasks that must be expressed in the different training programs [2].

The list of standards:

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

2) Learning Differences – The teacher uses 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 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 achievements.

9) Professional Learning and Ethical Practice – The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and constantly evaluates his practice. The teacher examines how his practice affects the students and makes alterations that are necessary 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 is a main role in the training of teachers. He bridges between the theory of teaching and the practice of teaching. The pedagogical instructor creates a relationship and a coordination between the theoretical studies of pedagogy learned in the theoretical disciplinary courses and the practical activities with the students, and directs towards the development of skills of the reflective self-evaluation [3][4][5].

The pedagogical instructor helps the students acquire the skills to cope successfully with a variety of activities, encourages them for personal and professional growth, effective behaviors of teaching and reduction of inefficient behaviors [6].

THE RESEARCH PURPOSE

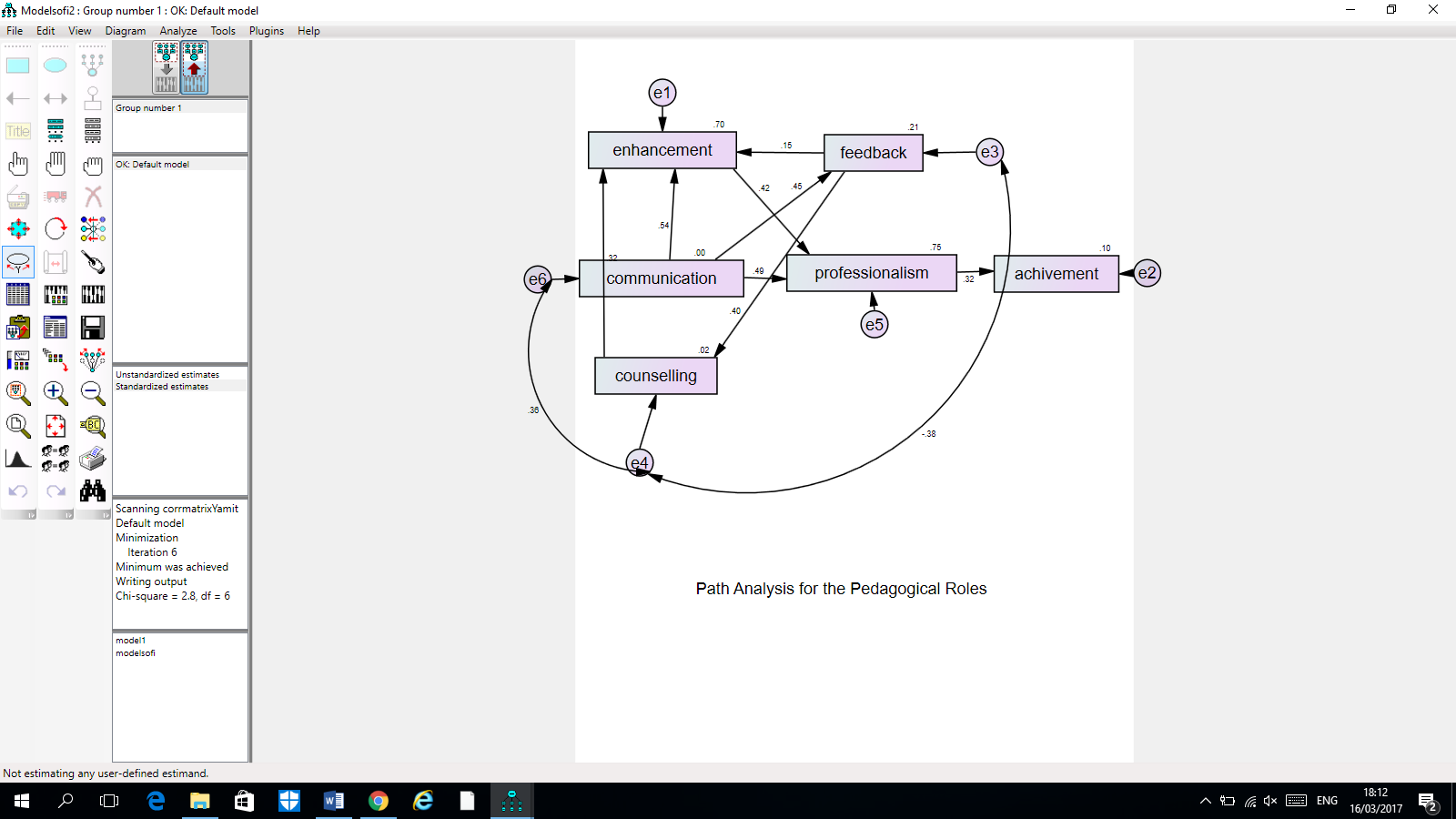
The research goal is to examine what had a greater influence on the students' achievements in their third and last year of training. To determine the main factor/s which predict and influence success as well as to examine how other factors influence each other and support the main factor/s.

RESEARCH METHOD

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

RESULTS

The path analysis produced the following results:



Study of the model shows that the main factor that predicts the achievements in the practical work is professionalism, B=.32. However, the model explains how other factors influence the professionalism significantly, the enhancement of the students B=.42, and the communication with the students B=.49. The factor of enhancement is predicted by feedback, B=.15, by communication B=.54 and by counseling B=.32. Counseling is influenced by the feedback B=.40 and feedback is influenced by communication B=.45.

DISCUSSION

The quantitative research has enabled to determine which main factor predicts the achievements in the practical work and in which way do other factors influence the main factor as well as each other.

The description of the pedagogical instructor's role includes five main factors according to the initial objective of the research study. The factors are described as follows:

Professionalism:

Pedagogical instructor takes part in the ideological development of the perception of training for teaching and improvement of the education and the teaching in the field, with the construction of an ideological infrastructure of the college – field partnership and outlining of the ways of action for the promotion of the partners [7]. This work entails the management of an instrumental dialogue with all the partners – teaching students, mentors, school faculty and peers – so as to find solutions to the problems that arise from the field. In addition, the pedagogical instructor must act out of intentions for the personal and professional growth of the students and the faculty of teachers as well as his personal development [8][9]. These processes require abilities, skills and knowledge in a wide variety of areas, some of which are traditional and some of which are modern.

The pedagogical instructor must be able to perform diverse actions:

* Support the students, encourage the students to seek counseling of additional experts, observe the lessons, provide feedback and guidance [10].
* The pedagogical instructor must help the students integrate between different types of knowledge: content knowledge, knowledge on the teaching of the knowledge field, analysis of different situations, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical learner knowledge, knowledge of educational context and knowledge of educational needs[11][12].
* Taking responsibility for building personal programs for the promotion of the students and acting on both the macro and the micro levels. The pedagogical instructors form unique programs so as to provide diverse experiences in different learning environments where different kinds of knowledge must be applied [13].
* The knowledge types that the pedagogical instructor must acquire are diverse [14]. The pedagogical instructor must remain updated in the innovations in all pedagogical fields as well as participate in different professional development circles in the framework of the communities of learners.

Communication:

Communication constitutes a main and inseparable element in the preparation conversation and in the feedback conversation. Salomon [15] claims that effective instruction depends more than on good communication. According to Salomon, reciprocal dependence among people depends on the attribution of meanings intentions to behaviors and events. The emphasis is on the way that the instructed party will use the lessons of the instruction [15]. According to several researches which have examined the main factors that affect instruction, it was found that the instructor's behavior is the most influential factor [16][17][18]. These studies describe an effective instructor as interested in the guided person, as addressing the guided person's emotions, as encouraging and respective of different opinions, as to open, authentic, empathetic. Od-Cohen [18] found that the interpersonal dimensions of the instructors and individuals have 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 the disciplinary knowledge regarding the component of the teaching. Without good interpersonal relations between the instructor and the instructed person the knowledge is not perceived as useful. Good communication is also essential in the organizational component. In the component of assessment, skills of observation and feedback are necessary. In the component of assistance, trustful relations and the ability of the pedagogical instructor to display empathy are essential [18]. These findings lead to a conclusion that interpersonal relations between the instructor and the instructed person are of great importance.

Empowerment:

Burk [19] claims that empowerment is not a simple process. He defines five processes of the empowerment of others: providing a direction, arousal (intellectual new directions alongside cognitive and emotional), external rewards (praises and incentives), internal rewards, development 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 sabotage the learning process, to help in the development of relations with the environment, to help develop skills of self-awareness and independent thinking, to provide social psychological support. This process may also influence the students' ability to support the future population of students [20][21][22][23].

Feedback:

The pedagogical instructor is required to provide feedback to 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 [21][23][24][25]. The guidance interaction between the instructor and the instructed is very diverse and can be divided into three main stages which are mutually related and benefit each other. The pre-active stage includes the preparatory conversation for the lesson that the instructed individual is about to perform. The active stage during which the instructor observes the instructed individual and the post active stage during which a feedback is given by the instructor. The feedback provided during the post-active stage is the core and main essence of the instructor's guidance and coaching work [26][27][28]. The feedback conversation is 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. The reconstruction during the feedback conversation enables the guided individual to judge and control the experience while assessing the achievements of the performance enables to make rational and ethical decisions [29][27][30]. (Russell 1989, Goodman 1995, Ross 1987)

This research shows that the prediction of the achievements is primarily related to professionalism, whereas the other factors intensify and strengthen the main factor.

Recommendations:

The research findings indicate that the existence of the roles of the pedagogical instructor, as presented in previous research studies, is nearly fully strengthened. Another conclusion indicates that the success in practical work depends mainly on the professionalism of the pedagogical instructor. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize this factor and to improve it. The pedagogical instructor has a main role in the training of the teachers. The pedagogical instructor is a key figure in the teaching process and in the process of the transformation of the student into a beginning teacher who accepts upon himself the management of a class that learns in an optimal manner. The research study indicates that the teaching students' high achievements in the practical work depend largely on the pedagogical instructor's professionalism. Surprisingly, the role of the pedagogical instructor does not require special training. The training institutions attempt to determine a high threshold in the determination of the entry data of the candidates for this role. For the most part, senior teachers who have succeeded in their work as expert teachers and who have a master's degree in the studies of education are accepted to the role of a pedagogical instructor.

The recommendations for an action program in the training of the teacher based on the research findings are:

1. To consider the population of the pedagogical instructors to be the main target for the empowerment by institutions who specialize in teacher training and supervisory bodies in the Academy and in the Ministry of Education.
2. To consider the profession of a pedagogical instructor as any other profession, which requires specialization.
3. To upgrade the role of a pedagogical instructor from a pedagogical instructor to a pedagogical specialist.

The analysis of the research enables to delineate the map of the components that are required in order to improve the level of professionalism and specialization. As shown, these components have a great impact on the professionalism of the pedagogical instructor:

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 topics related to the following subjects: what makes a teacher a good teacher, how to improve the teaching process. It is necessary to get familiar with all the styles of instruction as well as instruction processes and instruction models.
2. The component of communication – the students are not only the population of the instructed people but also partners in a long, mutual journey. As the pedagogical instructor extends the relevant knowledge related to the population of students in personal theoretical and practical aspects, there are increased chances of the pedagogical instructor to manage correct communication, productive conversation and instruction intended for the personal cultivation of every student.

3) The component of empowerment – It is necessary to focus on the search for the 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 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 the adult learners, the learning process itself, the viewpoints of the instructors versus the viewpoints of the instructed in different topics and skills.

5) The component of feedback – The feedback is an essential tool which helps the pedagogical instructor improve the students' performance with each following instruction activity. The development of instruction abilities and the skills of feedback will help the pedagogical instructor in forming the students from a reflective point of view.

The specialization studies of the pedagogical instructor must include the acquisition of professional instruments for the continuation of the growth and the professional development.

As a result of this research, an ongoing action program in the training of the students for teaching will include giving lectures on the subject of professionalism and its importance as a main factor which predicts the future achievements as well as the need of supportive factors: communication, empowerment, counseling, and feedback.

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