

## **Mentor and New Teacher Meetings: Implementation and Insights**

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### **Abstract**

Awareness of the induction stage of teaching has intensified in the past decade and the stage in various countries spans a period of several years. In Israel it covers a three-year period and its purpose is to meet the emotional, pedagogic and environmental needs of the new teachers. As part of the policy of the Israel Ministry of Education, induction units have been set up in colleges and universities in the country with the intention of creating a continuum stretching from the training stage to the stage of internship and thereon to professional development. Such a unit, Growth Resources, has been set up at the Kaye Academic College of Education, which is an advocate of the self-determination theory developed by Deci & Ryan (2000). The staff of the unit endeavours to learn about the processes taking place between mentors, interns and new teachers, in the framework of which it was decided to also investigate the viewpoint held by mentors.

In the present research an analysis was conducted of questionnaires completed by mentors following 20 hours of support to new teachers. The findings show that answers are indeed provided to emotional, pedagogic and environmental needs. A preliminary review shows that pedagogic needs are initially met; on conducting an in-depth review of the findings, however, it is seen that emotional needs are also met by a high percentage of teachers and that these needs are in parallel incorporated into other content. The findings are in line with the college credo, despite the fact that there is clearly a need for pedagogic-professional answers alongside support to new teachers. The findings also shed light on the personal contribution gained by the mentors participating in the process.

The findings underscore the importance of developing and cultivating contact between college staff and mentors, as well as providing suitable training for those interested in pursuing mentoring as a vocation.

## **Literature Review**

### **Induction Stage – Introduction**

There has been a significant increase in recent years in the need for teachers worldwide. The European Union has announced that teachers constitute the most significant factor influencing education in schools and student achievement (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; The European Commission, 2010). It is important that teachers entering the educational system be of superior professional quality, endowed with reflective ability and oriented to 21st century literacy, while being willing to invest in their own professional development (Bartell, 2005; Patrick, Elliot, Hulme & McPhee, 2010; Scardamalia et al, 2012).

Novice teachers enter the system full of hope, motivation and enthusiasm, infused with a sense of mission, desiring to wield an influence over their students and believing in their ability to do so (Intrantor, 2006; Pritzker & Chen, 2010). They expect the principal and organization to be supportive, their students to accept them as leaders, and their work to be meaningful, enabling self-fulfilment (Friedman, 2005).

The clash between their faith, hope and willingness on the one hand, and the reality on the ground on the other, comes as a blow to novice teachers, forcing them to fight for their survival. The result is frustration and burnout at the very outset of their professional career (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Kremer-Hayoun, 1985; Pritzker & Chen, 2010). The difficulty in coping and the feelings of emotional fatigue, physical exhaustion and frustration create an emotional overload, causing some teachers to leave the educational system (Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2006; Strahovsky, Hertz-Lazarovitch & Orland-Barak, 2008). Indeed, based on research studies conducted in Europe, the USA, Australia and Israel, the dropout rate of novice teachers during the first five years of work is as high as 50% (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; The European Commission, 2010).

In recognition of the importance of top grade teachers and the dismal reality on the ground, various countries have begun to develop absorption programs to help the novice teacher. In Israel internship is mandatory and in 2009 a three-year program was developed that focused on the induction year. All processes associated with the induction stage have been entrenched in the Director General's Circulars (5762/4B, 5764/9B, 5770/1B). The first year, which is the

period of internship, obliges the novice teachers to work at least one-third of a full-time position for a total of six months. In addition, he must participate in an internship workshop in a college or university, meet with a mentor for one hour a week, and undergo processes of evaluation. The fulfilment of his academic requirements in parallel with his success in the evaluation processes entitles him to a "licence to engage in teaching" and to advance from the status of "novice teachers" to one of "new teacher". In the year following internship, the teacher participates in a course for new teachers, consisting of 40 hours in which he studies in the framework of the college/university with a group of counterparts, and 20 hours in which he is accompanied by a veteran teacher (mentor). The course grants the teacher recognition for a raise in salary. At the end of the second year he is eligible for tenure. In the event that an additional probation year is required of him, he must receive a further 20 hours of mentoring in the following year. This policy spearheaded by the Internship and Induction Department, which is part of the Teaching Staff Administration. The department works on the one hand with inspectors, referents and trainers in the various districts, and on the other with coordinators in colleges and universities and with members of the absorption and training system, conducting mutual meetings, both on the district and national level (Zilbershtrom, 2013a).

### **Rationale Behind the Initiative – Difficulties of the Beginning teachers**

The unique feature of the teaching profession is that, unlike other professions, the system expects novice teachers to perform just like the other teachers. Although interns up to the induction stage have had field experience they have not been subjected to extreme pressure as their mistakes have been accepted with understanding and they have received constructive feedback both from the staff of the institution in which they have undergone training and from their colleagues. In the induction stage, however, they are expected to integrate and show impressive results in terms of student achievements, blend in with the ambience in the teacher's lounge, understand the organizational culture of the institution to which they belong, comply with the demands of parents, exhibit a command of a major part of the material relating to their disciplines, and meet the expectations of those around them. Novice teachers are expected to meet all these demands directly on commencing work, exactly like veteran teachers, even before their professional identity has crystallized (Harari, Eldar & Shechter, 2007; Karman-Hayun, 1985; Nasser-Abu, Fresco & Reichenberg, 2011; Reingold, 2009; Strahovsky, Hertz-Lazarovitch & Orland-Barak, 2008). This and other factors create

many difficulties for the novice teachers, classified by researchers according to four types: difficulties in adjustment to the educational system, pedagogic difficulties, difficulties in interaction with the students, and difficulties in developing their professional identity (Dvir & Shaz-Openheimer, 2011; Marable & Raimondi, 2007; Patrick, Elliot, Hulme & McPhee, 2010; Rothenberg, 2009; Shaz-Openheimer & Zilbershtrom, 2009;).

Difficulties in adjustment to the system focus on two parallel and interconnected issues. The first stems from relations formed in the school with the principal, coordinators, colleagues and other staff members. Beginning teachers must learn the organizational culture and internal politics of the school in which they work and how to conduct themselves in the system (Friedman, 2005; Maskit, 2013). The second difficulty arises from the need to belong, constituting a significant part of the factors underlying a person's drive in his workplace, perceived as imparting a sense of physical and emotional security (Fisherman, 2005). A study of the organizational culture and an understanding of how to conduct oneself within it would help beginning teachers in assembling an initial "tool kit" for coping with difficulties and for understanding the tasks, demands, values, traditions, and school policy and vision, with its various ramifications (Nasser-Abu Alhija, Fresco & Reichenberg, 2011; Pritzker & Chen, 2010).

Pedagogic difficulties stem from a lack of practical knowledge and class management skills. Although graduates of colleges and universities acquire theoretical knowledge, they claim that it does not prepare them for coping with the planning of curricula or the day-to-day demands of the school in general, and the class in particular (Sunndip-Panesar, 2010). The myth that teaching is a "natural" gift – that being a good teacher is an inborn trait – disregards the evidence that students who are trained to teach and obtain proper support and professional supervision become good, effective teachers. Furthermore, professional knowledge itself is not a guarantee of success in teaching: knowledge is an essential element but the teacher must know how to impart it to his students such that learning and knowledge become personal assets (Feiman-Nemser, 2013). Beginning teachers have responsibilities that are identical to those of their veteran colleagues; however, they have to spend much time in searching for relevant learning materials, understanding and internalizing curricula, and developing compatible lessons and teaching units, though their ability to apply the theories they have learned is limited and deficient (Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2006; Pritzker & Chen, 2010; Reingold, 2009). An additional difficulty in the field of teaching stems from the

increasing need to allow for individual differences, namely, to engage in differential planning such that the needs of the entire student population are met, thus instilling in them a feeling of confidence and self-worth (Sunddip-Panesar, 2010).

Difficulties in interaction with students and parents: difficulties with the students referred to in the research literature are typically those relating to discipline, student motivation, coping with differences between students, student evaluation, and dealing with students' personal problems (Lazovsky & Zeiger, 2004). Coping with disciplinary problems constitutes the most trying factor due to the sense of helplessness in the face of insolence by students and the behaviour associated with it (Harari, Eldar & Shechter, 2007; Hobson et al., 2007; Strahovsky, Hertz-Lazarovitch & Orland-Barak, 2008). Novice teachers enter the system full of faith but also harbour apprehensions regarding realization of their capabilities, as may be seen in the questions posed by Nemser-Feiman (2003): "Who are the students? What are their families like? What background do they bring with them? How will they be tested? Am I supposed to see that the students are quiet or make my colleagues understand that teaching sometimes goes hand-in-hand with a chaotic classroom and active students? And after the first week, how am I supposed to know what my students really know? How do I cope with the gaps in the class and their learning needs?" (p. 26). These and other questions underscore the concern on the part of novice teachers on the one hand, and their disappointment at the reality on the other. Their belief that they will be accepted willingly and with due respect by their students is refuted (Friedman, 2005) and they are busy coping with disciplinary problems, feelings of alienation, disrespect on the part of the students, and problems in imparting learning habits and in finding the right way to reach the students in order to develop their motivation to learn ( Strahovsky, Hertz-Lazarovitch & Orland-Barak, 2008; Zilbershtrom, 2011). Difficulties in interaction with parents stem from the scepticism and lack of confidence in the abilities of the novice teacher conveyed by the students' parents, as well as the parents' unwillingness to cooperate (Maskit, 2013).

Difficulties in development of a professional identity are associated with the intense nature of the teaching profession, the pedagogic, emotional and administrative load, and the many pressures with which novice teachers must cope (Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2006). Novice teachers enter the system with a world view of what "good teaching" means. Their perspectives take shape during their training years, following which they face a reality that compels them to take a close look at themselves. They begin to understand that not all their

beliefs and aspirations can be fulfilled in the given educational reality and that they will have to chart a course for themselves and make the relevant professional adjustments (Shaz-Openheimer & Zilbershtrom, 2009). Barak-Orland & Maskit (2011) exposed the extent to which the dream is shattered: recognition of the limitations regarding teaching capabilities, coping with fulfilment of a vision that is not in keeping with reality, and struggling with the many voices that are heard in the educational system. These create in novice teachers a sense of ambiguity regarding their professional identity, which has only just started to crystallize, accompanied by a sense of malaise, frustration and isolation (Shaz-Openheimer, 2011).

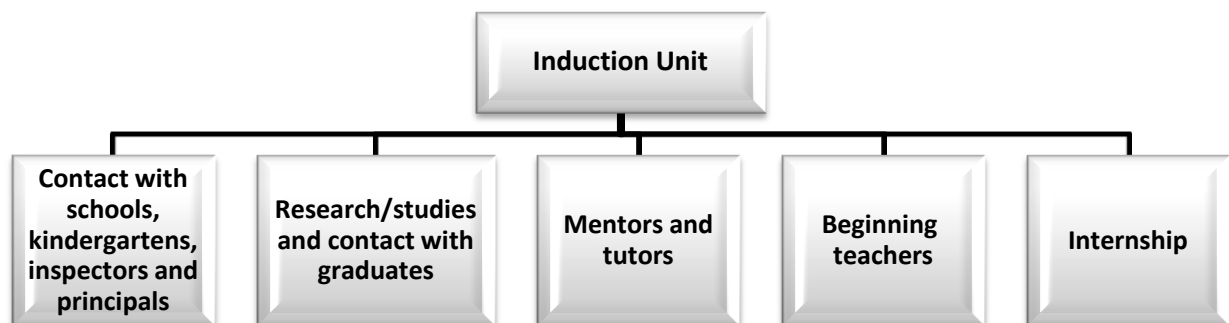
### **Establishment of Induction Units in Colleges and Universities**

Support programs throughout the world in general, and in Israel in particular, are intended to assist the beginning teacher on his entry into the educational system, in dealing with various difficulties, in closing the gaps between studies during the training period and their hands-on application, and in shaping his professional identity. In Israel two support circles exist: the first circle exists in the framework of the college or university where the internship workshop is held in the first year and the course for new teachers in the second year; the second circle consists of first and second year mentors. Mentors in the workshops and courses must be professionals with expertise in mentoring of groups, able to head a systematic and structured process that will assist beginning teachers both in easing the pressure and in developing reflective thinking (Zilbershtrom, 2013b).

During the past two years units have been set up in Israel's colleges and universities that address the induction stage in teaching. These units centralize the general handling of the induction stage, from internship workshops held from time to time starting from the fourth year of training, through courses for novice teachers, to courses for training of mentors in the framework of professional development in various stages of teachers' professional careers (Zilbershtrom, 2013a). Establishment of these units is a manifestation of the concept of continuity as presented by Feiman-Nemser (2001) and the vision of development continuity as part of the professional course spearheaded by the Israel Teachers Administration (Nagar, 2013). Aimed at a common language leading to a clear and focused organizational culture, the "dialogue" between the Administration departments according to Nagar (2013) has trickled down to the colleges, thus laying the groundwork for establishment of the units (Zilbershtrom, 2013a).

The Director General's Circular 2013 (currently in printing) also addresses the subject of induction units for teachers: "As part of the concept of training and ongoing professional development of the teacher, the training institution is responsible for accompanying its graduates through the induction stage. Contact with the graduates is intended to assist the graduates on the one hand, and improve and upgrade the processes of teacher training on the other ... the reference is to a pedagogic-organizational unit that centralizes all existing efforts relating to the induction stage of the graduates ... the business of the unit consists of the entire range of activities associated with the induction stage of the teaching profession, amid reciprocal contact with the preliminary training stage and the subsequent professional development stage, and in close contact with the educational arena of schools and kindergartens absorbing the graduates."

The focal points of the unit as presented in the Director General's Circular may be depicted by the following diagram:



### **"Growth Resources" – Induction Unit in the Kaye Academic College of Education**

A teachers induction unit was set up in the Kaye Academic College of Education some two years ago. The unit set goals relating to the unique needs of beginning teachers, while adhering to the concepts of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) as advocated by the college and adapting its work to the goals of the Ministry of Education. Firstly, two overlying principles were defined: (1) reduction of the burnout and dropout rate in the teaching profession in the early years of work; (2) promotion of autonomous motivation and professional identity on the part of the beginning teacher. Subsequently, operative goals were defined: (1) creation of a unique support system to accompany the professional development processes following the training years; (2) creation of a supporting professional community

characterized by dialogue between its members, cooperation, and creation of the knowledge and tools that are prerequisites for entry into the school and the teaching profession; (3) accompaniment of the teacher in the ongoing development involved in building up a professional identity during the initial years; (4) empowerment of the teacher's self-determination during the induction stage: development of competence, strengthening of the sense of belonging and autonomy. The goals express the concept of continuity that is spearheaded by the Teachers Administration in general, and the Internship and Induction Department in particular, based on self-determination theory (Kaplan & Zafrir, 2012).

Self-determination theory, developed by Deci & Ryan (2000), is a motivational theory that deals with an individual's internal processes, underscoring the universal desire for psychological growth and development (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This theory relates to three basic psychological needs, satisfaction of which contributes to inner, autonomous motivation leading to optimization, social and emotional adaptation, and development of a professional identity:

- The need for bonding and belonging, manifested in the desire to be part of a social fabric that imparts a sense of physical and psychological protection (Deci & Ryan, 2000). A perusal of the research literature dealing with the world of beginning teachers shows that one of the most neglected needs is the need for bonding and belonging, both in relationships with staff members in the school and on the organizational level (Patrick, Elliot, Hulmeand & McPhee, 2010; Wilkins, 2012).
- The need for a feeling of competence, manifested in an individual's desire to believe in his ability to realize his plans, aspirations and goals, stemming from a sense of efficacy and self-confidence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). A feeling of competence in teaching expresses the belief on the part of the teacher in his ability to have a positive impact on his students and his perception regarding his ability to carry out tasks in the field of teaching and education (Bandura, 1977; Kizel, 2011; Sunddip-Panesar, 2010). The teacher's faith in himself, his knowledge and his capabilities have a significant impact on his motivation and level of performance since an interdependence exists between the personal sense of competence and the processes involved in development of a professional identity. Further, a feeling of competence affects the beginning teacher's professional growth and development, with a high feeling of competence enhancing his capabilities and his readiness to cope with difficulties (Kozminsky & Cloyer, 2012).



- The need for autonomy, referring to the need for guidance and self-regulation while fulfilling one's capabilities and proclivities, as well as crystallization of goals, attitudes, values and plans making up the professional identity (Assor, 2003; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Implementation of the self-determination approach in the Growth Resources Unit is based on the belief in the potential for growth existing in the teacher, finding expression both in internship workshops and in courses for new teachers. The workshops and courses are held in a non-judgmental "safe space", with the emphasis on support of competence. During the internship year the focus is on issues relating to the teacher's initial encounter with his students, including disciplinary problems, violence, class management, and relationships that for the novice teacher are new (creation of bonds, interaction and conflicts with a range of personalities, including parents, fellow teachers, principal and students). In the second year, whose jumping-off point is extension of the processes that had begun in the first year, the emphasis is on support of autonomy and in strengthening of exploratory processes for reinforcement of the teacher's self-identity and capabilities in terms of initiative and proactiveness (Kaplan & Zafir, 2012).

The faith and vision that take shape and stand at the forefront of the work processes in the college in general, and in the Growth Resources Unit in particular, have created common principles for working with novice and new teachers, namely: empowerment of the teacher as a professional and an individual; meetings of a workshop-procedural nature that encourage peer study; activities by a group of equals in a safe space; development of the group as one consisting of fellow teachers at an identical stage of professional development; emphasis on reflective dialogue; demonstration of concentric circles between experience and learning in the workshop on the one hand, and the teacher's work in the school on the other; dialogue based on authentic and relevant case studies on the ground; and kick-off from a reference point of experiences and connection between theory and practice.

### **First Year and Second Year Mentors (Second Support Circle)**

Based on a perusal of the research literature and on policy observed in various countries, mentoring of novice teachers at the start of their professional career may be defined as a principal strategy of utmost significance (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). In a document issued by the General Committee for Education and Culture of the European Commission

(2010), numerous testimonies are found to the key role played by the mentor in supporting and meeting the needs of novice teachers from the personal, social and professional angle. In the USA, mentors have been defined as agencies providing support, advancement and assistance in preventing dropout, the operative principles being respect for privacy, avoidance of judgmentalism, flexibility, accessibility, attentiveness, empathy, cooperation and demonstration (Goldrick, Osta, Barlin & Burn, 2012; Marable & Raimondi, 2007). In an official paper issued by the Israel Ministry of Education, the role of the mentor is defined as the main link in the internship program for teachers (Shaz-Openheimer & Zilbershtrom, 2009).

The traits of the mentor are defined in the professional literature and by policymakers as follows:

- Knowledgeable and experienced in the field of teaching – it is important to try and achieve a compatibility between the mentor and the novice/new teacher in terms of subject and age group. Such compatibility creates a common denominator that allows the focus to be placed on pedagogic-subject content. Guidance of the beginning teachers in generic matters (class management, handling of disciplinary problems, coping with conflicts, professional ethics, etc.) is important, but an advantage lies in the fact that the mentor is able to explain to the beginning teachers the meaning of good teaching in the specific field common to them both. Difficulties and/or deliberations also exist at times in connection with a specific age group or pedagogic elements specific to a particular discipline (preparation of curricula, planning of teaching units or lessons, presentation of learning goals dealing with subject-related principles, etc.) (Lazovsky, Reichenberg & Zeiger, 2007; Shaz-Openheimer & Zilbershtrom, 2009; Smith & Ingersoll, 2003; Youngs, 2007). In order to meet the expected standards, the mentor must have confidence in his knowledge and capabilities, such that he will be willing to share the knowledge and experience he has accumulated (Rippon & Martin, 2006; Shaz-Openheimer & Zilbershtrom, 2009).
- Skilled trainer – just as the student population is heterogeneous, so is that of the beginning teachers. Although all are new to the system, and all are in need of support and warmth, differences exist between them, manifested on the pedagogic-professional level,

in emotional needs, in processes that facilitate learning and growth, in their capacity for openness, and other factors. Norman & Feiman (2005) claim that the attentiveness of mentoring to the needs of beginning teachers is important, even when these vary over the period of mentoring.

Crasbornm, Hennissen, Brouwer, Korthagen & Bergen (2011) expand the scope of the issue and suggest four mentoring styles: (1) the mentor leads the dialogue, incorporating open questions that evoke a discourse on the subject level on the one hand, and providing answers on the emotional level on the other; (2) the mentor leads the pedagogic discussion, expresses his opinions and attitudes, and offers advice; (3) the beginning teacher initiates the subjects of the discussion, with the mentor responding and offering advice; (4) the beginning teacher leads the discussion while the mentor responds with open questions that stimulate independent thinking on the part of the beginning teacher. Researchers do not take a stand regarding the preference of one approach over the other, but claim that it is important for the mentor to know how to adapt his approach to suit the teacher; thus what is required of him is deep powers of discrimination, an ability to adapt himself to the needs of the novice teachers, and empathy. Hence the importance of guidance skills as an optimal precondition for the mentor's performance, aimed at enabling the beginning teacher to grow and assisting him in developing a professional identity (Marable & Raimondi, 2007). In order to ensure the success of the mentoring processes in Israel, courses for mentors have been opened in all colleges and universities that teach them to cope with the complex role they have agreed to take on, with its dilemmas and deliberations, and with the need for meaningful and constructive reflective dialogue on the part of the novice teachers (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009; Zilbershtrom, 2013b).

- Aware of the beginning teacher's need for belonging to the educational framework – the beginning teacher (novice and new teachers) comes to the school without knowing anyone there and is filled with concerns and questions in addition to feeling a sense of isolation. This is where the mentor can intervene and act as liaison between the beginning teacher and the school staff based on his familiarity with the organizational culture of the place. Such intervention by the mentor will lower the initial level of apprehension on the part of the beginning teacher (Shaz-Openheimer & Zilbershtrom, 2009). A mentor who understands that cultivating a sense of belonging in the beginning teacher is a basic need,

as stated in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and who knows how to consolidate relations between the beginning teacher and the school staff, will make an initial impact with respect to the basic need for belonging, thus influencing formation of the beginning teacher's professional identity (Rippon & Martin, 2006).

- Able to provide emotional support – the beginning teacher finds himself at a juncture that is fraught with emotional tension, stemming from the changes that he is undergoing in the way of demands, disappointments, isolation and other difficulties. The mentor must therefore serve as a colleague who will heed the distress signals conveyed by the beginning teacher and give him the legitimization to recount his difficulties based on the assurance that they will remain confidential (Lindgren, 2007; Marable & Raimondi, 2007; Shaz-Openheimer & Zilbershtrom, 2009). Characteristics such as good interpersonal communication, attentiveness and empathy are a common thread appearing in the research literature (Goldberg, Shaz-Openheimer, Shavasky & Basis, 2012; Lazovsky, Reichenberg & Zeiger, 2007; Lindgren, 2007; Zuljan & Bizhak, 2007).
- Available, accessible and consistent – the weekly meetings serve as a steady anchor, giving the beginning teacher a feeling of confidence (Shaz-Openheimer & Zilbershtrom, 2009). Although the work of the mentor and beginning teacher in the same institution inevitably brings them face to face in random encounters during the work day, permitting interpersonal communication and ad hoc solutions to unexpected difficulties, delineation of a regular framework for meetings gives beginning teachers a sense of security due to its consistency, while the role of mentor acquires an aura of professionalism and active involvement. It is here that the mentor can navigate the maze of needs and determine the golden mean – flexibility on the one hand, and professional problem-solving on the other (Rippon & Martin, 2006; Shaz-Openheimer, 2011). Rippon & Martin (2006) claim that a lack of mentor- beginning teacher hours could create negative feelings, with all that this implies. Support for this statement is obtained from Goldenberg, Shaz-Openheimer, Shavasky & Basis (2012), who found that 52% of mentors believe that a lack of time with the beginning teacher constitutes an inhibitory factor in the mentoring process.

## **Contribution of Mentoring and Guidance to the Mentors Themselves**

The work of the mentor is complex and accompanied by much deliberation throughout, at times contradictory, resulting from its very nature: support and assistance vs. evaluation prior to award of a teaching license; understanding of the professional dependence of the beginning teacher vs. the need to cultivate personal autonomy; empathy and attentiveness vs. advice and practicality; permanent and binding framework vs. flexibility and orientation to the needs of the beginning teacher, and commitment to the system. This duality appears to present opposing aspects and the mentor must learn when in practice to place the emphasis on one aspect or the other (Shaz-Openheimer, 2011b). Learning of this nature allows personal growth and development of the professional identity of the mentor himself inasmuch as he conducts critical self-reflection throughout the mentoring process. In addition, it presents the mentor with an opportunity to acquire new tools and ideas to improve his own teaching, undergo renewal, upgrade the strategies he has used, and hone his communication skills (Hagger & McIntyre, 2006). Teachers who serve as mentors following training refer to the strengthening of their own self-confidence and to the improvement in their interpersonal relationships. These teachers/mentors feel pride, especially when they witness the success of novice teachers whom they have mentored, spurring them to intensify their own personal commitment to the school and the community to which they belong (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009).

The mentor plays a significant role in supporting and facilitating growth in the beginning teacher. Joint work based on awareness can at times be accompanied by tension and deliberation, but also allows the mentor to identify his personal difficulties and principles, forcing him to cope with them from a position of empowerment and professional development (Shaz-Openheimer, 2011b).

## **The New Teacher in the Research Literature**

The research literature abounds with information on all matters relating to mentors and novice teachers. However, it does not make a distinction between novice teachers and new teachers. In Israel the concept of internship has been in existence for 13 years, but a definition of the status of the new teacher has been known for only the past three years. In order to distinguish between the two stages and the various entities involved, a uniform

terminology has been established: "novice teachers " in the internship year, and "new teachers" in the year following internship (Zilbershtrom, 2013b). Other definitions may be found in research worldwide relating to the initial years in teaching, such as: new teacher, novice teacher, intern, beginning teacher (European Commission, 2010; Wilkins et al., 2012; Zuljan & Bizjak, 2007).

### **Rationale Underlying the Present Research**

One of the goals of the Teachers Induction Unit is to "create a unique support system for the processes of professional development following the training years". In this framework new teachers receive in the first year of teaching, after the induction, guidance for a period of 20 hours by a mentor who is a graduate of a mentoring course, in addition to 40 hours of workshop meetings in the college.

The work of mentoring is carried out in the school, a fact that makes the creation of synergy between activity in the workshop and the teacher's mentoring difficult. In 2012, Kaye Academic College set itself the target of strengthening the connection with mentors. To this end, it was decided to study all elements of the process involved in the work of new teachers with mentors. It was important to relate to the subject from two viewpoints: that of the new teachers and that of the mentors.

In order to study the processes from the point of view of mentors, a questionnaire was sent to mentors requesting a summary report on their annual activities with new teachers. The present research focuses on a content analysis of these questionnaires. The findings will allow the team from the Growth Resources Unit to prepare a work program for further activity in general, and a program for the following academic year in particular.

### **The Method**

A total of 308 teachers study in the framework of courses for new teachers in the college, together with 217 mentors (some mentoring more than one new teacher).

The mentors were sent a questionnaire with a request to write a "summary report on the mentoring process". Of the questionnaires returned a total of 125, representing 58% of the

mentors, were analyzed. In addition, 80 of these mentors (64% of the 125 respondents) participated in a training course for mentors, 60 of whom (48% of the respondents and 75% of the teachers who had undergone training) passed the course or are currently participating in the course at Kaye Academic College. The central content in some of the subjects was identified as part of a thematic analysis and counted by means of a frequency analysis. Certain questions were eliminated from the final analysis since either the teachers chose not to answer them, or their answers were not relevant or unclear. The method is based on content analysis as described by Shkedi (2003) and Creswell (2007).

### **Aims of the Content Analysis**

1. To identify the content on which the mentors focus with teachers during their first year following internship.
2. To identify areas where the new teacher is in need of assistance in the eyes of the mentor in order to create a link and ensure compatibility between these needs and the workshop activities being carried out in the college.
3. To identify the contribution of the mentoring process to the mentors themselves.
4. To examine whether a correspondence exists between the work of mentoring and the perspective of the Teachers Induction Unit at Kaye Academic College.

### **Findings**

Following is a distribution of the themes that arose from the question dealing with the subjects discussed at the meetings between mentors and new teachers:

Subjects of meetings	Number referring to the issue	Percentage referring to the issue
Class management and disciplinary problems	86	68.8%
Work programs, curricula and personal programs	76	60.8%
Issues relating to integration in the system and the school culture, and team work	67	53.6%
Planning of teaching units and lessons	61	48.8%
Subjects relating to evaluation: preparation of tests, writing of evaluations, preparation of indicators, certificates, etc.	55	44%
Interaction with parents	43	34.4%
Providing answers to students with special needs	38	30.4%
Varying teaching strategies	36	28.8%
Using teleprocessing and technology	28	22.4%
Observing the lessons of the new teacher and providing feedback	27	21.6%
Specific reference to emotional support for the new teacher and assistance in cultivating his personal competence	25	20%
Special initiatives and activities in the classroom and the school – parties, excursions, class and school events, etc.	25	20%
Teacher-student relations	21	16.8%
Reflection and professional development	20	16%
Cultivation of a class climate and inculcation of values	20	16%
Creation of a study environment	19	15.2%
Providing responses to individual differences	18	14.4%
Time management	17	13.6%
Use of illustrative tools	14	11.2%
Adaptation of learning materials	12	9.6%

The following subjects were also mentioned: individual hours, high order thinking, Director General's Circular, teacher motivation. However, only a few teachers focused on these subjects (2-6 teachers).



Were there difficulties in mentoring? A total of 105 mentors, representing 84% of the respondents, answered this question. Altogether 63 respondents (54%) wrote that there were no difficulties at all in the mentoring process and 29 (23.2%) detailed or emphasized problems in timing. For example: "The difficulty was to find a suitable and proper time for dialogue" (respondent 120); "There was not enough time to sit together and talk about the issues" (respondent 112). Eleven mentors (8.8%) stated that there were a few difficulties at the start of the process, which no longer existed the moment a relationship of trust was established. Two teachers (1.6%) stated that there were difficulties throughout. It should be noted that a difficulty arose in analysis of the answers because of the fact some of the respondents referred to the difficulties of the new teacher in the classroom instead of the mentoring process itself. For example: "The teacher fitted in nicely in the system and in the school in which he taught, his acclimatization was very good. The difficulty lay in monitoring and developing a curriculum during the course of the year" (respondent 104). In such cases the answers were screened and reference was made only to the part that related to the mentoring process, where this existed.

Advantages and disadvantages of a new teacher and mentor working in the same school – 21 of the respondents were mentors to kindergarten teachers, such that this question was not relevant from their point of view. In addition, 7 more teachers chose not to answer the question. The rest of the teachers (91), with the exception of six, believe that it is preferable to mentor a teacher from the same school, first and foremost because of accessibility and availability – ad hoc meetings in the teacher's lounge, specific issues necessitating immediate attention – a point that is associated with the difficulty presented in the previous question, namely, free time for meetings. In addition, the teachers referred to a familiarity with the school system and culture as an advantage, and to the ability of the mentor to ease the integration of the new teacher into the staff setup. The disadvantages mentioned by the six other teachers related to the concern on the part of the new teacher regarding the lack of objectivity and the uneasiness of having a mentor from the staff. It is important to state that 86 of the respondents out of 104 (82%) work with the new teachers in the same school.

The questions that dealt with intervention by the principal in the mentoring process, in the methods of guidance used and in the degree of compatibility between meetings with the mentor and the workshop processes were eliminated from the final analysis due to the many answers that were not relevant and/or unclear.

The central content that was identified in the last three questions was identified in a thematic analysis and counted by means of a frequency analysis.

Following is the distribution of all the themes that arose from the question dealing with personal insights and proposals for improvement:

Insights and proposals for improvement	Number referring to the issue	Percentage referring to the issue
No personal insights or proposals for improvement stated	61	48.8%
There is a need for contact between the mentors and the college staff and it is recommended to hold seminars for the mentors	23	18.4
There is a need for emphasis on pedagogic content	14	11.2%
There is a need for additional mentoring hours	13	10.4%
The mentoring process assists in the absorption of the new teacher and contributes to his self-confidence	9	7.2%

The remaining issues were raised by only 0.8 to 4% of the mentors.

To the question as to whether they had any special requests from the college staff, 102 (81.6%) teachers replied in the negative and 12 (9.6%) desired contact between the mentors and the college staff or meetings with the new teachers. It should be noted that 9 (7.2%) of the new teachers would like to find a way to ease bureaucratic procedures (reporting, completion of forms, etc.).

Contribution of the process to the mentors themselves – 28 respondents (22%) did not answer or thought that they had been asked to write about the contribution to new teachers (the questionnaires in which reference was made to the new teacher were not included in the content analysis). The thematic content analysis was carried out on 97 questionnaires. A total of 57 teachers (constituting 59% of the teachers who answered this question) stated one or two contributions, and the rest referred to 3-4 subjects from which they had benefited.

Contribution of the mentoring process to the mentors themselves	Number referring to the issue	Percentage referring to the issue
Professional development	38	30.4%
Peer study	38	30.4%
Self-reflection	29	23.2%
Acquisition of new tools	26	20.8%
In-depth study	24	19.2%
Sense of satisfaction / achievement	15	12%
Coping with challenges	12	9.6%
More meaningful attention to the induction stage	12	9.6%
Mentoring – processes, skill and importance	11	8.8%
Strengthening of personal status in the school	3	2.4%
Decision to start a course for training of mentors	2	1.6%

Some of the respondents stated in brief how they had benefited from the process. Others elaborated on the subject, as may be seen from the following examples: "I learn about myself all the time through the new teachers. .... and uphold and reinforce positive aspects and improve aspects that need improvement. To this end I am greatly assisted by the mentoring process that I am undergoing together with the new teachers ... and this process has helped me immensely to develop and improve both professionally and personally" (respondent 3); "... new experiences, new situations in the system in general and many more new ways of handling and methods for the teacher. Widening of professional development and motivation to develop professionally ... development of discussions and development of understanding and more serious consideration to the matter of mentoring new teachers" (respondent 5); "the very fact that I carried out observations ... made me gain insights into my own learning method. This made me think about acts that I perform automatically ..." (respondent 10); "the entire mentoring process is one of mutual learning. I firmly believe in joint work and peer study and therefore it is an opportunity to meet ... and learn much from it, especially in all matters relating to creative lesson structures. I have learned to be patient and tolerant towards others and to have greater belief in the fact that one learns more when things are uncomfortable and difficult" (respondent 54).

## **Discussion**

The nature of the mentoring process is defined by an analysis of the meetings between the new teacher and the mentor. The present analysis points to the central content that the mentors are engaged in with the new teachers, and this content appears to meet the goals of mentoring as defined by Israel's Internship and Induction Department.

The Director-General's Circular 2009/1b presents the roles of the mentor: "Personal mentoring during the internship year is performed by a mentor, as is done during the first and second year following internship. Mentors are experienced members of the teaching profession who have been trained for the job, are part of the teaching staff and are involved in educational activities. Mentoring will be carried out through routine meetings, reflective dialogues, observation of lessons, provision of feedback and evaluation."

The impact of the mentor on the optimal absorption of the novice teacher or new teacher could be manifested in three areas:

1. Professionally: assistance in the teaching-learning process, in ways to evaluate students, in class management and in cultivation of professional thinking.
2. Environmentally: assistance in familiarization with procedures, rights and obligations, and in integration into the school culture.
3. Emotionally: assistance in development of relations based on trust and in cultivation of a professional self-image.

It appears that in their work with new teachers, mentors emphasize content relating to all three goals above. Subjects relating to the professional aspect appear throughout the list of subjects mentioned by the respondents, such as: class management (68.8%), preparation of a work program and curriculum (60.8%), construction of teaching units and lesson structures (44.8%), and evaluation and teaching strategies.

The environmental aspect is manifested through issues associated with "integration into the school staff and system" (53.6%). The findings showed that most of the mentors who answered the questionnaire had undergone training as mentors and nearly half of them had

done their training in Kaye Academic College. Thus is manifested in the trickle-down effect with respect to the importance of support in imparting a sense of belonging to new teachers.

The need for contact and belonging (Deci & Ryan, 2000) constitutes one aspect of the theory of self-determination, although the emotional aspect and cultivation of competence may also be seen in the subject content of the various meetings. Although no direct mention is made of the emotional side, meeting emotional needs constitutes an integral part of the subjects, such as: assistance in integration into the staff setup, providing an answer to the need for belonging on the part of new teachers, interaction with parents (34.4%), satisfying the requirements of students with special needs (30.4%), and teacher-student relations (16.8%). The processes of observation and feedback (21.6%) refer *prima facie* to the professional-subject aspect, but in practice the observer must know how to provide non-damaging feedback both on the reflective level to help in making the new teacher grow and on the emotional level to help him develop and learn. Meeting emotional needs is basic and important according to the motivation theory of Deci & Ryan (2000). Coping with emotional difficulties during the initial years in teaching is also emphasized by other researchers (Dvir & Shaz-Openheimer, 2011; Goldberg, Shaz-Openheimer, Shavasky & Basis, 2012; Lazovsky, Reichenberg & Zeiger, 2007; Lindgren, 2007; Marable & Raimondi, 2007; Patrick, Elliot, Hulme & McPhee, 2010; Rothenberg, 2009; Shaz-Openheimer & Zilbershtrom, 2009; Zuljan & Bizhak, 2007). Indeed, it was interesting to see that 20% of the mentors chose to emphasize the issue in their work with new teachers as an extension of subjects in which the personal aspect plays an integral part (such as interaction with parents, students and school staff). Apparently, the fact that many mentors are graduates of mentoring courses governs the subjects that are emphasized and the insights gained. According to the viewpoint of the college (Kaplan & Zafir, 2012) it is important to place greater emphasis during the internship year on the professional-pedagogic aspect, whereas in the first year of teaching greater emphasis should be placed on emotional aspects, on adjustment and on supporting autonomy on the part of the new teacher.

Nevertheless, it appears that despite the different professional situation of the teacher in the first year of teaching and the professional experience gained during the internship year, mentors still place great emphasis on instructional-pedagogic aspects. It is possible that this stems from the readiness of the new teacher to acquire more hands-on tools that will allow him to develop professionally. It is also possible that it is a question of the desire to prove

himself and his capabilities and that this is his way of strengthening his professional identity. Another possibility is the confidence placed by the new teacher in the staff of the college unit that he will be helped to obtain the emotional support he needs in the framework of the workshop, such that he will be able to meet the needs of the hour hands-on as conveyed to him by the mentor. In addition, it must be taken into consideration that in the first two years of work the teacher does not participate in professional-disciplinary development (in the framework of professional training courses) as do the other teachers, and these meetings with the mentor help him to connect with the policy of the Teaching Staff Administration and the district.

An additional aspect that derives from the findings deals with the issue of timing and coordination of mentoring meetings. A total of 23.2% of the mentors emphasized coordination of meetings as being problematic due to the lack of time. Others perhaps did not emphasize this, but 91 respondents (93% of the respondents who answered this question) stated that it was preferable to work in the same school as the new teacher for the simple reason of availability and accessibility during the work day as well as coordination. Mention of this fact by mentors supports the statements of Shaz-Openheimer & Zilbershtrom (2009) that while it is an anchor that gives the new teacher a feeling of confidence, it is also a source of aggravation because the educational system does not devote sufficient attention to the subject. It is possible that working in the same school does provide some compensation in terms of ad hoc encounters but, as stated by Shaz-Openheimer (2011) and Rippon & Martin (2006), having a defined framework of meetings gives the new teachers a sense of security in view of the regularity involved, granting a dimension of professionalism and efficacy to the role of the mentor. In contrast, a reliance on occasional meetings alone could have an adverse effect on the process.

The last issue addresses the mentor himself. Hagger & McIntyre (2006) present the personal contribution of mentoring to professional development of the mentor, and indeed, the findings confirm their claim and underscore the issue of professional development (30.4%), peer study (30.4%), self-reflection (23.2%) and acceptance of new tools (20.8%). Altogether 15 teachers (12%) make a mention of the sense of satisfaction they feel, as stated by Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson (2009). Furthermore, mention of the need by 23 mentors (18.4%) for contact with the college through joint meetings or seminars supports the statements of the above researchers regarding the desire to study and develop. Reference may

be made in this context to the two teachers who stated that they realized the importance of training and intend to register for a course in mentoring. A re-examination of the statements of the mentors sheds light on the place they occupy, their vision, work and study methods, as well as the significance behind the frequency analysis. There is no doubt that the words of the Teaching Staff Administration director are a direct reflection on the quality of these teachers' work: " ... teachers are the spearhead of the educational system and they lead meaningful teaching and learning processes in schools. The quality of the educational system depends on the quality of its teachers" (Nagar, 2013, p. 17).

### **Recommendations:**

The present research signals the start of a process of familiarization with the status of mentoring in the first year of teaching (following internship) and with ways to establish relationships based on trust and better communication with mentors. The findings and the insights derived from them lead to the following recommendations:

- Continued cultivation of contact with mentors in view of their requests and the insights gained in connection with the personal contribution to them from the process. At least one study day should be fixed in the college for this purpose. In addition, careful attention should be paid to ongoing personal contact with them through emails, while keeping abreast of various events occurring throughout the year, even on the level of greeting cards for various festivals. The aim is to cultivate interpersonal relations to the extent that mentors feel relevance and care on the part of the unit staff – that they are not there only for the purpose of filling in forms and questionnaires but are also perceived as educational leaders assisting in the growth of the new generation of teachers.
- Identification of an optimal solution to the problem of timing meetings between new teachers and mentors, and examination of the findings to see if they are also valid for the stage of internship in which the meetings are intended to take place regularly once a week. To this end it is recommended to present the findings to as many boards of directors as possible and discuss the need, significance, and logistic and emotional problems stemming from them. It is possible that collaboration will yield models for optimal absorption through understanding and containment.

- Modification of the questionnaire such that a distinction is made between pedagogic and emotional aspects, allowing more in-depth analysis to stimulate additional thinking on the content structure of courses for mentors and novice teachers. In any event, misunderstood questions should be reworded.

In conclusion, in the year following internship the new teacher advances from a stage of survival and begins to effectively become part of the school staff. Optimal meetings between mentor and new teacher are intended to provide the new teacher with answers in the here and now. Solutions to the needs of the new teacher can be found in the questionnaires and it is possible that the training undergone by the mentors will have an important impact here. At the same time, it is important to continue nurturing the mentors too as part of the college credo regarding self-determination, in light of the contribution to both new and veteran staff. Care must therefore be taken to maintain and cultivate contacts between the college and mentors, in parallel with contact with the principals and inspectors in the district. "A structured track consisting of pedagogic mentoring and professional evaluation allows better integration into the system, consolidation of professional identity, development of a commitment to the profession and prevention of dropout by top quality teachers:" (Director General's Circular 2009/9b).



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