

Abstract

This monograph examines the relationship between changes that have occurred in Israeli society over the years and the teacher education system in Israel, as reflected in curricula. The latter serve, among other things, as the central tool for introducing changes into the world-views of the contents that are taught. These changes are effected by means of a change in the proportions between various topics, a change in study structure, and a change in the nature of the teaching messages (Sabar Ben Yehoshua, 1982; Connelly & Lantz, 1991).

The investigation of the teacher education system is of great importance since it plays a central role in the implementation and assimilation of changes in the education system. Accordingly, changes in national education policy obligate the teacher education system and the contents with which it deals. For this reason, it is important to identify changes in the teacher education curricula and understand their nature and their relationship to changes in Israeli society.

For the purpose of examining the relations between social changes and curricular changes, three academic colleges in the center of Israel were selected. Each of them has a unique association: the first college belongs to the state education stream and is associated with general Zionism (Levinsky College of Education); the second college is associated with the kibbutz movement (Kibbutzim College of Education); and the third college belongs to the state-religious education stream and is associated with religious Zionism (Talpiot College of Education). The principal source of the data that were examined consisted of the curricula in the educational sciences for the elementary teacher education track. Educational sciences are subjects that include various aspects of education and are associated with learning and teaching events that take place in the school. Among the subjects that are included in the educational sciences are philosophy of education, psychology of education, sociology of education, curriculum planning, teaching methods, classroom management, learning methods,

the inclusion of the special child, teaching and learning theories, teaching skills, and so on. Teaching in the elementary school occupies a central place because education for this age-group is basic and fundamental, and significantly affects the child's development. Elementary education is responsible for the acquisition of fundamental learning skills, social behaviors and values. There is a great deal of time for intensive interaction among the pupils and the teachers in the elementary school. The class teacher occupies a central place in the child's life, and his/her influence on the learner is long-term.

The first part of the monograph presents a theoretical background from three points of view: (a) An examination of the interrelations between societies and the education systems in them, as they are described in the research literature. Specifically, the relationship between society in the State of Israel on the one hand and the education system in general and the teacher education system in particular on the other is examined. (b) An examination of the development of the education system and the teacher education system in Israel in each decade since the establishment of the State. In order to provide a comprehensive picture, the development of the education and teacher education systems is described, commencing from the period preceding the establishment of the State. Such a survey enhances the understanding of the nature and background of the directions of the development in the education and teacher education systems. (c) An examination of the development of the curricular inquiry in Israel and abroad, and its influence on the history of training programs in the teacher education institutions.

The second part presents the research aims, questions and methods that served to identify changes in the curricula over the years. For the purposes of this study, two appropriate research methodologies were chosen: the comparative historical study method and the content analysis method.

Comparative historical study views the curriculum as a single whole and makes it possible to identify, interpret and evaluate the curricular ideas it

contains. By means of the comparative historical research of the curricula, it is possible to identify the presence or absence of study contents and comprehend the nature and the direction of the changes (Iram, 1982).

Applying the content analysis method to curricula makes it possible to identify the educational value of the curriculum, to expose its hidden agenda, and to clarify its advantages and disadvantages (Ariav, 1989). The content analysis of curricula is conducted by means of a structured analysis-scheme. A curriculum can be interpreted objectively by using an analysis-scheme that is constructed in a fixed framework of categories that include criteria (Ben Peretz, 1995).

Howey and Zimpher (1989) constructed a scheme for analyzing teacher education curricula that accomplishes several aims. One aim is the analysis of curricula in order to identify components that reflect the policy and uniqueness of the training institutions. Another aim is to enable a comparison of curricula for the purpose of pinpointing the similarities and differences between them. This scheme was found to be the one that was closest to the research needs, but in order to focus on the examination of the effects of the social changes on the content and structure of the curricula, a unique analysis-scheme entitled "The Scheme for Identifying Changes in Teacher Education Curricula" was devised. This scheme comprises three dimensions: (1) the characteristics of Israeli society, (2) the educational world-views of the training institution, and (3) the general values that are stressed in the training institution. Each dimension includes categories containing central components that have to be identified in the curricula. The structure of the scheme made it possible to obtain a whole picture in response to the research questions.

The third part presents the research findings and the conclusions that are drawn from them. In order to obtain an overview of the findings and implement them, they were analyzed and interpreted from four points of view: (1) the categories that comprise the scheme, (2) the policy and educational world-view of the training institutions that are being

investigated, (3) the events according to the division into three decades – the seventies, the eighties, and the nineties, and (4) the events that occurred in Israel during those years.

The fourth part examines the research findings and utilizes them for comparing and for drawing conclusions. First, the education policy as it is reflected in the publications of the college is investigated. Then, identical and different components of the curriculum are examined by comparing the different categories to the analysis. At the end of the fourth part, the final picture regarding the main research question takes shape – the nature of the links between changes in the training programs in Israel and the changes in the Israeli society.

The findings reveal several important points:

- a. Over the years, no changes occurred in the policies and world-views of the three colleges. Each college presents a policy that places teacher education – as a professional process that necessitates the acquisition of skills, practical experience and a broad education – at the top of its priorities. Alongside all of these, each institution stresses its policy regarding the enrichment of every learner's inner, value-based and personal world. In the three colleges, emphasis was placed on building a campus imbued with an atmosphere of cultural and social values and principles of cooperation, social involvement, updating, and innovation. The resulting data identify a relationship between the contents of the curricula and the declared unique world-views of the three colleges.
- b. A connection was found between social changes that occurred in Israel on the one hand and changes in the contents of the curricula and the official documents of the teacher education institutions on the other. Some of the social changes are reflected in the curricula of the colleges, and even relate to specific events.

The following topics were related to the educational reform, the education laws, and the demographic properties of Israeli society. The manner in which these topics are dealt with recurs in the various courses that are studied in the educational sciences in the three colleges. The influence of these components can be explained by the fact that they affect everyday life in the school as well as the ongoing work of the teachers.

- c. It was found that the social changes that occurred did not affect general value-based domains. Each college continued to uphold the values it deemed important throughout the three decades. It was found that the security-related, political, social and educational events that we examined did not have any direct bearing on extents to which values were dealt with, or on decisions regarding which values should be stressed each year.

The findings that emerge from the research afford an opening for other studies to examine the relationship between the declared curricula and those that are taught.