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ABSTRACT

The Contribution of a Pre-Service EFL Teacher Education Program in Enhancing Self-efficacy, Sense of Coherence in Teaching Situations and Motivation to Pursue a Teaching Career

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FIT	Factors Influencing Teaching
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
PSEFLT	Pre-service English as a Foreign Language Teachers
SDG4	Sustainable Development Goal 4
SOCITS	Sense of Coherence in Teaching Situations
TREP	Teaching, Relationship, Exposure and Pedagogy
UNESCO	United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Introduction and Rationale

Teacher shortage around the world is genuine, substantial, and increasing. Based on the UNESCO reports (2022), there is a need to recruit 68.8 million teachers in order to realize their Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), whose main goal is to increase the supply of proficient educators, guarantee education of high quality, and foster lifelong learning prospects for all by 2030. Many countries are currently suffering from this shortage including the U.S, Australia, China, Estonia, France, Great Britain, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, in addition to most developing countries (Vargas-Tamez, 2022).

This worldwide massive teacher shortage, at both the elementary and high school levels, is a problem in Israel as well. In previous years the teacher shortage was felt specifically in subjects such as English (EFL), Mathematics and Hebrew. However, according to the latest report from the Israeli government (Weissblay, 2023), the Ministry of Education has announced a crisis in all subjects in the system. The 2022/23 academic school year opened with a shortage of 5,671 teachers, of which 871 were EFL teachers (Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel (CBS), 2022). According to Weissblay (2023), by 2026 an additional 24,000 teachers will be required for the education system in Israel, including approximately 16,000 teachers in elementary schools, 4,000 teachers in junior high schools and 4,000 in high schools.

Teacher shortage has been strongly linked to a decrease in teacher education enrollments, high rates of teacher attrition (Sutcher et al., 2016) and high turnover rates (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). To date, the world has witnessed a global decrease in the number of applicants interested in becoming a teacher, which is exacerbating the teacher shortage situation. In Israel, there has been a decline in the enrollment of students in teacher education from 13,500 to 11,400, a 16% decrease from 2020/21 to 2021/2 (CBS, 2022). The CBS (2022) has provided data to show that there has also been a gradual but noticeable decrease in graduates in all tracks of teacher education programs as of 2018, with the lowest number of graduates noted in the 2021/2 academic year (a 16% decrease from 11,379 to 9,750).

The situation is even more challenging since the percentage of graduates who opt for a career in teaching upon graduation has also decreased from 66.4% in 2002 to 63.4% in 2017. Amongst pre-service EFL teachers (PSEFLTs), only 65.8% of the graduates in 2017 chose to pursue a career in teaching (CBS, 2019). These statistics align with national reports from various countries that also reveal that a substantial proportion of graduates from teacher education programs do not pursue careers as teachers (OECD, 2005). Therefore, all efforts must be made to ensure that students registered in programs catering to teacher education feel prepared and make the choice to go into the teaching profession upon completing their studies.

There is a vast amount of research to date regarding teacher attrition, teacher retention and why novice teachers choose to withdraw from the system within the initial five years of their professional journey, both in general and among EFL teachers (e.g., Arnup & Bowles, 2016; Carmel & Badash, 2018; Klassen & Chiu, 2011). However, less studies have been conducted on the determinants and predictors of prospective EFL pre-service teachers' intentions to begin their induction year and become teachers upon graduation. Rots et al. (2014) found evidence that indicates that apart from the initial motivation for teaching and perceived employment prospects, the responsibility for graduates' decisions to become practicing schoolteachers in the field lies with teacher education programs. The question remains whether teacher education programs are offering optimal, rich, and effective learning experiences and are preparing teachers for the realities they will encounter when they begin their teaching career.

This PhD research involves two studies that together aim: to determine which variables can act as predictors of PSEFLTs' intentions to pursue a teaching career upon graduation; and to check the contribution of an innovative PSEFLTs' education program in enhancing self-efficacy, sense of coherence in teaching situations (SOCITS) and motivation to pursue a teaching career.

The research will implement an exploratory sequential mixed methods design, which entails the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design aims to qualitatively explore the motives of PSEFLTs to pursue a career in teaching and proceeds with a mixed methods study comprised of two parts: a quantitative design based on the qualitative findings that aims to check the impact of an intervention program on PSEFLTs; and a

qualitative design to further explore the contribution of this intervention program to PSEFLTs. The primary methodology to be employed in this research will be *action research* which enables a small-scale intervention and a deep understanding of the effects of such an intervention. Through action-oriented learning and professional development, this methodology aims to enhance and bridge the divide between research and practice (Cohen et al., 2018).

The primary objective of this doctoral dissertation is to address the issue of teacher shortage by enhancing our comprehension of the factors that impact graduates of teacher education programs' choice of a teaching career upon finishing their studies. As such, the current study provides valuable contribution towards enhancing our understanding of which factors may be influential in the decision of PSEFLTs to opt for a career in teaching after completing their teacher education program. In addition, this study focuses on the contribution of a teacher education program, the TREP program, to influence PSEFLTs' choice to enter the teaching field and thus help to decrease the teacher shortage in Israel. The TREP Program is an innovative teacher education program for pedagogy studies focusing on Teaching (T), Relationship (R), Exposure to successful EFL teachers and experts (E) and Pedagogy (P) and serves as the central focus of these studies.

This thesis comprises four chapters:

Chapter 1 offers an overlook on teacher education globally and of EFL teacher education programs. Moreover, this chapter provides the study's contextual background by presenting an overview of higher education in Israel including teacher education, the new guidelines for teacher education and EFL teacher education in Israel.

Chapter 2 presents the first study, Study I, an explorative qualitative study on Israeli PSEFLTs' perceptions of the determinants of their career choices, prior to the development of the TREP program. This chapter introduces a comprehensive literature review focusing on the internal and external factors that impact career intentions among PSEFLTs. Research suggests that pre-service teachers' choices to opt for a teaching career are based on *internal factors* including initial motivation, based on the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) Choice framework (Watt & Richardson, 2007); teaching self-efficacy, in accordance with the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura,

1977) and sense of coherence in teaching situations (SOCITS) (Bracha & Hoffenbartal, 2011) based on Antonovsky's (1979) sense of coherence theory; and *external factors* such as mentor and faculty support (Rots et al., 2012, 2014), and teacher education programs (Rots et al., 2007, 2010, 2014; Seker et al., 2015). This chapter further addresses the research design and methodology employed in Study I, which comprises the research aims and questions, the participants, the instrument used for data collection and the procedures employed. The methods employed for data analysis are also introduced along with issues pertaining to validity, reliability, and ethical considerations. The study's findings are showcased, and the chapter concludes with a comprehensive discussion of these results.

Chapter 3 introduces the second study, Study II, a mixed method study which includes two parts: the first part is a quantitative design that aims to examine the impact of the TREP intervention program on the PSEFLTs; and the second part is a qualitative design to further explore the contribution of the TREP intervention program to PSEFLTs. The chapter commences with a literature review focusing on teacher education programs. It continues with an explanation of the teacher education program at the college where the study took place and offers an overview of the TREP program. It covers the research design and methodology for both the quantitative and qualitative studies, including the research aims and questions, the participants, the data collection instruments, and the procedures employed. The methods employed for data analysis are also introduced along with issues pertaining to validity, reliability, and ethical considerations. The study's findings are presented, and this section ends with a discussion of both the qualitative and the quantitative findings.

Chapter 4 offers a conclusion for this research. It highlights the main findings and presents the overall conclusions. It further addresses the limitations, implications, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies.

Overview of the Studies

Study I

The objective of this study is to make a contribution to the current body of knowledge in the field of teacher education. This study seeks to examine the professed motives of PSEFLTs at a prominent teacher education college in central Israel regarding their decision to enroll in teacher education. Furthermore, it seeks to identify the factors influencing their choices to embark on a teaching career after completing their teacher education program. The results obtained from this study formed the basis for the creation of a unique and novel teacher education program tailored specifically to EFL teachers.

An examination of the existing literature reveals that graduates' choice to pursue or not pursue a teaching career upon graduation has been given limited attention (Rots et al., 2014; Sinclair, 2008; Watt & Richardson, 2008). Nevertheless, both personal internal factors and external factors have been shown to impact the decisions of pre-service teachers to pursue or refrain from entering the teaching profession after completing their teacher education program. Personal internal factors include initial motivation, self-efficacy, and Sense of Coherence in Teaching Situations (SOCITS); and external factors include mentor support, faculty support and teacher education program satisfaction. This chapter presents and discusses both these personal internal factors and external factors. The research questions framing this study are:

- What are the main stated motives of PSEFLTs to enroll in teacher education?
- Does SOCITS exist among PSEFLTs and how is it expressed in relation to their decision to pursue a teaching career?
- With regard to their decision to pursue a teaching career, how do PSEFLTs view the importance of self-efficacy, availability of a support system and satisfaction from the teacher education program?

The participants were 24 PSEFLTs, of which six in their third year who wished to pursue a teaching career, six in their third year who were ambivalent about their intentions to pursue a teaching career, six in their fourth year who had decided to pursue a teaching career, and six in their fourth

year who had chosen not to pursue a career in teaching. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews and analysed using the *Atlas.ti* software. Both data-driven and driven thematic analysis were conducted.

Findings. Regarding initial motivation, consistency was observed between the findings and the FIT- Choice model (Watt & Richardson, 2007). The main findings revealed that PSEFLTs' perceived teaching abilities and intrinsic values have a preeminent influence on PSEFLTs when selecting a career in teaching, significantly shaping their decision to enter the profession. In contrast, motivations based on social influences, such as external pressure or unintentional choice, tend to result in less committed students who may opt not to pursue a teaching career after graduation, unless there are positive experiences and influences from the field.

This study also found that in addition to initial motivation there are other internal and external factors that are perceived as crucial in the decision of PSEFLTs to opt to pursue a teaching career upon graduating from their teacher education program. These include a combination of possessing a high level of self-efficacy and SOCITS, being given mentor and faculty support during the program, experiencing positive incidents in the practicum, and feeling satisfaction from the teacher education program.

The findings in this study confirmed the three-factor composition of SOCITS, the inner coping resource, as suggested by the authors of the model (Bracha & Hoffenbartal, 2015), namely, Comprehensibility, Manageability and Meaningfulness, among PSEFLTs in third and fourth year who wanted to pursue a teaching career. In terms of comprehensibility, they related to understanding teaching methods, teaching situations and the education system; in relation to manageability, they referred to being in control, being flexible and coping with the challenges in teaching, and in regard to meaningfulness, they spoke about personal satisfaction, personal motivation, fulfillment, and emotional meaningfulness. SOCITS was perceived as significant regarding whether they opt to pursue a career in teaching– specifically the component of meaningfulness.

Furthermore, the levels of SOCITS were found to be closely linked to the levels of self-efficacy. The findings of the present study highlight the significance of PSEFLTs' perceived teaching abilities and their ability to establish a rapport with the students. This was evident among both the third-year students who expressed a desire to pursue a teaching career and the fourth-year students who actively pursued a teaching career. In addition, third-year students who were uncertain about their decision to pursue a teaching career also expressed extensive thoughts regarding their perceived teaching abilities. Conversely, the fourth-year students who chose not to pursue a teaching career, emphasized their lack of confidence and negative practicum experiences.

The external factors were also identified as significant considerations in the decisions of PSEFLTs to pursue a teaching career. All participants, with the exception of those who did not pursue a teaching career, emphasized the positive experiences they encountered during the practicum, specifically highlighting their mentors' support. They spoke about the mentors as role models from whom they gained valuable knowledge, how the mentors were available and willing to provide them with all the necessary assistance. PSEFLTs noted that negative practicum experiences and lack of support from the mentors significantly lowered their levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy and as a result made them less committed to the profession. Regarding satisfaction from the teaching education program, it was observed that, despite the importance of PSEFLTs' general satisfaction from the teacher education program, this factor alone does not seem to play a significant role in their choice to enter the teaching profession.

In addition, the findings in this study emphasize the importance of the third year in the teacher education program . The students who remained uncertain about their decision to pursue a teaching career in the following year, provided distinct responses compared to the fourth year students who had already made up their minds not to pursue a teaching career. Those in third year who were still debating related both to positive practicum experiences and faculty support and negative experiences in the practicum, in contrast to the fourth-year students who scarcely spoke about positive experiences from their practicum. Furthermore, their discourse provided more examples of the SOCITS components, compared to the fourth-year students who had decided not to pursue a teaching career.

Conclusion and Implications. This study has revealed several insights. Based on the participants' perspectives, the findings suggest that a comprehensive approach which takes into consideration both personal internal factors and external factors is crucial in designing effective EFL teacher education programs to promote the likelihood of graduates entering the teaching profession.

There seems to be a need to add and make adaptations to existing teacher education programs, specifically focusing on improving pre-service teachers' self-efficacy, SOCITS and motivation. Addressing these factors appears to be crucial for fostering sustained commitment and engagement and a desire among PSEFLTs to pursue a teaching career. Consequently, it appears that the third year of the teacher education program plays a crucial role in shaping the perspectives and decisions of PSEFLTs.

The findings of this study contributed to the development of an innovative EFL teacher education program (TREP), specifically catered to third year students in EFL teacher education. This program concentrates on sustaining and enhancing the initial motivations candidates come with when they enroll in teacher education programs. In addition, it focuses on ensuring PSEFLTs are equipped with high levels of self-efficacy and SOCITS at the end of their teacher education program. Moreover, teacher education institutions may need to develop strategies to engage with candidates who have enrolled in teacher education due to external influences or as a fallback career. It is crucial to find ways to make the teaching profession meaningful and relevant to these students.

Study II

The literature review highlighted that various studies conducted around the world have stressed the inadequate preparation perceived by pre-service teachers upon completing their teacher education programs (Alwahibee, 2016; Chaw & Kopp, 2021; Ma & Cavanagh, 2018). Nevertheless, certain elements of teacher education programs were found to be crucial in preparing pre-service teachers, including, the practicum (Chien, 2015; Gray et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2016); connecting the theoretical knowledge acquired to the practical field experiences (Gravett & Ramsaroop, 2015; Orland-Barak & Leshem, 2009; Zeichner, 2010); as well as employing effective pedagogical practices such as microteaching (Banga, 2014; Brown et al.,

2015; Gurbuz, 2015; Kumari, 2014; Punia et al., 2016); and the use of reflective practices in teacher education programs (Farrell, 2012, 2016; Msimanga, 2020; Russell, 2017, Wright, 2010). In addition, it was found that there is a need to nurture the relationship between pre-service teachers and pedagogical instructors (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Huang et al., 2020; Quin, 2017).

Based on the literature review and the findings of the first study (Chapter 2), a pioneering teacher education methodology program was developed. This program, called the TREP program, is tailored to PSEFLTs in the third year of their teacher education and focuses on four major areas that have been found to be critical and significant in the development of PSEFLTs: the *Teaching* (*Practicum)* component; the *Relationship* between the pre-service teachers and the pedagogical instructors, the mentors, and the faculty; the pre-service teachers' *Exposure to the Field* (in-service EFL teachers, experts who specialize in "Unique" population and stakeholders); and the *Pedagogy* component. It is implemented in the methodology course by the third-year pedagogical instructors in the largest teacher education college in central Israel. The aim of this program is to enhance PSEFLTs' self- efficacy, SOCITS and motivation to teach to increase the possibility that they will opt for a teaching career after graduation.

Study II comprises two parts: Study II-A and Study II-B

Study II-A. The current study is a quasi-experimental study which aims to investigate the influence of the TREP intervention program on Israeli PSEFLTs' self-efficacy, SOCITS and motivation to pursue a teaching career. The following hypotheses were tested:

- H1: Pre-service EFL teachers will report higher self-efficacy following their participation in the TREP intervention program.
- H2: Pre-service EFL teachers will report higher SOCITS following their participation in the TREP intervention program.
- H3: Pre-service EFL teachers will report higher motivation to pursue a career in teaching following their participation in the TREP intervention program.

In addition, the following research question was examined:

- What is the influence of the TREP program on the PSEFLTs' motivation to pursue a teaching career?

The participants of this study included all 36 PSEFLTs studying in the third year of a teacher education program at the college in this research. During the academic year, four third year students dropped out from their teacher education program at the college. Three of them due to health issues which prevented them from continuing, and one as a result of not keeping up with the academic program. The final number of participants was therefore 32. In addition, a control group consisting of 15 third year PSEFLTs from other teacher education colleges was employed.

For this quantitative study, data collection was conducted through the administration of a survey, specifically a self-report questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of three sub-questionnaires: *Motivation to choose a teaching career* (FIT-Choice Scale (Richardson & Watt, 2006)); *Self-efficacy in teaching* (Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001)); and *Sense of coherence in teaching situations - SOCITS* (SOCITS Questionnaire (Bracha & Hoffenbartal, 2011)). The items were all rated on a Likert scale between 1 ("Absolutely disagree") - 7 ("Absolutely agree") (See Appendix J).

Study II-B. The second part of this study, Study II-B, was a qualitative study, which aimed to understand the subjective experience of PSEFLTs following their participation in the TREP program. The research questions of Study II-B aimed to explore:

1. Which leading factors in the intervention program emerged in the discourse of the PSEFLTs as being significant in their perceptions of teaching?
2. How may these factors have impacted the PSEFLTs' perceptions of their self-efficacy, SOCITS and motivation to pursue a teaching career?
3. How may these perceptions have impacted the decision-making process of PSEFLTs with regard to pursuing a teaching career?

Particular attention was placed on the relationship between the various elements of the TREP (Teaching, Relationship, Exposure and Pedagogy) program and the PSEFLTs' motivation, self-efficacy and SOCITS.

For this particular study no sampling was employed and all 32 PSEFLTs in the TREP program were asked to participate. However, not all showed interest in participating in the interviews and the response rate was 69% (N=22). Regarding the reflective diaries, all 32 PSEFLTs kept a journal during the year. Each PSEFLT was given a notebook in the first session of the academic year, and they were given a prompt or question and asked to relate to it at the end of each session.

In addition, at the end of the academic year, the following question was posed to all 32 students: "Are you going to sign up for the induction year and pursue a teaching career?"

Findings of Study II-A and II-B. The quantitative results showed that the TREP program succeeded in raising the PSEFLTs' levels of self-efficacy in the three self-efficacy subscales: engaging students, using instructional strategies and classroom management. Moreover, there was also an increase in the total self-efficacy score following the TREP program. The highest increase was revealed in their perceptions of being more efficacious in using instructional strategies, that is, being able to use different teaching methods and strategies, as well as being capable of adjusting the lessons to different levels. The findings further revealed a significant increase in the general SOCITS score, specifically in the Manageability and Meaningfulness components. Regarding motivation, the findings disclosed a significant increase in two of the first order factors: perceived teaching ability and intrinsic career value following the participation in the TREP program.

The thematic analysis in Study II-B allowed for an in-depth qualitative examination of the interviews and the reflective journals and identified four main themes that emerged from the PSEFLTs' discourse: *confidence, motivation, awareness, and support system*. In addition, from the journals only, an additional theme of *calmness* was noted. The analysis identified the emergence of all these themes within all four of the TREP components. The PSEFLTs reported feeling more confident, more motivated, more supported, and more aware. This can be directly

attributed to all four components of the TREP program: Teaching, Relationship, Exposure, Pedagogy.

The themes found support the findings in Study II-A and provide further evidence for how the different components of the TREP program work together to make PSEFLTs feel more efficacious and confident in their teaching abilities, more motivated as well as feeling they have more resources to cope with different teaching situations.

An additional research question addressed in this study related to the motivations behind PSEFLTs choosing a career in teaching. Research has shown that pre-service teachers around the world are influenced by a host of factors when deciding to pursue teaching as a profession (Watt & Richardson, 2007). The quantitative results of the current study revealed that among PSEFLTs in Israel, social utility values, specifically the desire to shape the future of children/adolescents, and perceived teaching abilities were the most influential motivational factors for choosing a teaching career. However, intrinsic career value was rated nearly as high as perceived teaching abilities and none of the other motivational factors were rated below the midpoint of the scale. This finding revealed that there are multiple motives and reasons for why PSEFLTs in Israel select a career in teaching. However, personal utility values, including having a secure job, job transferability, and family time, were rated lower than the social utility value and intrinsic career value, suggesting that extrinsic motives are not highly significant in attracting candidates to teaching in Israel and pre-service teachers seem to be less motivated by external factors.

Regarding the question posed to all 32 PSEFLTs at the end of the academic year, "Are you going to sign up for the induction year and pursue a teaching career?", 53% (N=17) chose to commence a career in teaching and found a school for their induction year, whereas 47% (N=15) decided not to do so.

Conclusion. The quantitative findings of Study II-A and the findings emerging from the thematic analysis in Study II-B shed light on the potential benefits of the TREP program for third year PSEFLTs. The research findings lead to the conclusion that participation in the TREP intervention program contributes to raising the level of PSEFLTs' self-efficacy in terms of student engagement,

instructional strategies, and classroom management; to enhancing the PSEFLTs' SOCITS levels; and to increasing motivation levels in terms of perceived teaching abilities and intrinsic career values. These results denote that the different components of the TREP program: *Teaching, Relationship, Exposure and Pedagogy*, have together enabled the PSEFLTs to master new methods, strategies and gain new tools to make them feel more confident, motivated, and prepared for teaching in the classroom. Consequently, the TREP program, with its unique elements, seems to be an effective teacher education program for third year PSEFLTs that helps prepare them for the realities and the challenges they will face in the education field when they begin their teaching careers.

Furthermore, this research indicates that the main motives for PSEFLTs in Israel to choose to enroll in teacher education are social utility values, including shaping the future of children; their perceived teaching abilities; and intrinsic career values, namely the love for the profession. In addition, the participants in the TREP program express high satisfaction with their decision to pursue a career in teaching, indicating that PSEFLTs in Israel appear to select this path driven by selfless motives and overall contentment with their choice.

However, despite reporting feeling more confident and more efficacious in their teaching abilities and having more resources to cope with the challenges of the profession following the TREP program, almost half of the PSEFLTs (47%) chose not to enter the education system and pursue a career in teaching. It seems that even though the participants were found to be satisfied with their choice to study teacher education, the selfless intrinsic and altruistic motives that attracted them to this profession in the first place, might not be enough to make them choose to enter the system.

Although Israeli PSEFLTs do not seem to be attracted to the teaching profession for its financial benefits, the low salaries, and the low status of teaching in Israel could be the reason why many of them end up not pursuing a career in the teaching profession after completing their studies. It seems that nowadays a low status career that does not offer high and attractive salaries, and that is not considered a respectful career, will not succeed in attracting and maintaining high quality candidates.

Final Conclusion and Implications of the Research

The findings of this research shed light on the importance of understanding pre-service teachers' initial motivation when they enroll in teacher education and begin teacher education programs. PSEFLTs with high intrinsic motivation and perceived teaching abilities are more prone to opt for a teaching career after they complete their studies as opposed to those who choose to enroll in teacher education due to social influences. Understanding these initial motivations may therefore have significant repercussions on teacher education programs, both in recruiting PSEFLTs and retaining them in the program. Failing to consider their initial motivation to enter teacher education programs, may result in students losing interest, reduced satisfaction, and ultimately discourage pre-service teachers from opting for a teaching career. On the other hand, targeting these motivations, specifically, the intrinsic motivations and perceived abilities, may enhance the motivation and satisfaction of third year students who are still uncertain regarding their choice to pursue a teaching career, thereby increasing the likelihood of them pursuing a teaching career.

In addition, this research has replicated the findings of Bracha and Hoffenbartal's (2015) study on SOCITS and provided new indication of the significance of SOCITS in relation to PSEFLTs' decisions to become teachers. The findings also emphasize the significance of the third year in the teacher education program as crucial in enhancing PSEFLTs' levels of self-efficacy and SOCITS. PSEFLTs who are still uncertain regarding their decision to pursue a teaching career upon graduation expressed higher levels of SOCITS compared to those who had already decided not to pursue a teaching career.

Hence, the results presented in this thesis highlight the importance of fostering collaboration between teacher education institutions and mentoring schools. This collaboration is crucial to ensure pre-service teachers are assigned to exemplary mentors who can provide valuable guidance and support throughout the practicum. The positive experiences in the field coupled with the guidance and support from the mentors was deemed significant in preparing PSEFLTs for the teaching profession.

Moreover, the insights gained from this research underscore how important it is to integrate the practicum experience into teacher education institutions. It is crucial to explicitly address the adversities faced by these pre-service teachers in the field during their training. Specifically, it appears there is a need to provide third-year students with greater exposure to the actualities they will encounter during their internship year and to focus on their personal strengths and coping resources, particularly those relating to SOCITS.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate a distinction between the sense of readiness to teach and the desire to be a teacher. Feeling prepared for a teaching career and possessing high levels of self-efficacy and SOCITS seem to be insufficient to motivate the PSEFLTs into actually pursuing a teaching career.

The potential impact of this study on the field of teacher education is significant. Its findings may make valuable contributions not only within the local Israeli context, but also to teacher education programs worldwide, making it a universally beneficial contribution. Following the implementation of the TREP program, several implications arose.

On the theoretical level, this research illuminates the significance of elevating the self-efficacy levels of pre-service teachers and enhancing the inner coping resources they possess as part of the preparation for the challenges they will encounter in schools and to help raise their sense of readiness. It also reveals the necessity to fully comprehend the motives for enrolling in teacher education. However, although previous studies have shown that satisfaction from teacher education programs are an efficient predictor of entrance into a teaching career, this research has demonstrated that there is a distinction between readiness to teach and the desire to become a teacher. As such, programs offered by teacher education colleges alone may not suffice to impact PSEFLTs' decisions to choose a career in this profession. Despite the benefits of such programs, there seem to be other factors that prevent PSEFLTs from pursuing a career in teaching.

On the methodological level, semi-structured interviews that were developed specifically for this study may be suitable for use in other countries and cultures. In addition, the reflective journals

kept by the participants, which enabled them to reflect and openly share their thoughts, feelings, and dilemmas is a tool that may be used in future studies in the teacher education field.

On the practical level, the TREP intervention program that was developed for this research, has demonstrated its effectiveness in preparing prospective teachers for a career in teaching and equipping them to navigate the frequent changes that arise within the education system. Other colleges of education may benefit by adopting the TREP program to ensure that their PSEFLTs graduate feeling more efficacious in their teaching abilities, more motivated and more equipped with the inner coping resource, SOCITS.

As in all action research, following the implementation of the TREP program and examining its outcomes, it was possible to identify areas that required improvement. Further modifications will continue to be made based on student feedback collected at the end of each academic year.

Recommendations for further research and future orientation

Drawing from the results of this research and the noted limitations, further research should be conducted relating to teacher education programs being used in other institutions, in Israel and abroad. In addition, future research should seek to replicate these studies with pre-service EFL teachers in other institutions, not only in Israel but in other countries as well. Moreover, future studies may seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the TREP program in addressing teacher attrition, by investigating whether graduates of the TREP program who chose to embark on a journey as a teacher actually stay in the profession for longer periods.

Although PSEFLTs express contentment with their decision to register and start their teacher education program, it appears that the selfless, intrinsic, and altruistic motives which initially attracted them to the profession, as well as the high levels of self-efficacy and SOCITS, may not be compelling enough to assure their entrance into the system. Consequently, in light of the alarming rate of teacher dropouts at the final stage of the initial teacher education, policy makers and the Ministry of Education should take all necessary actions to elevate the reputation of the teaching profession, help teachers gain respect and prestige, and improve teachers' working

conditions. Improving the prestige of teachers in the Israeli society may be the only way to tackle the severe teacher shortage in Israel.

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