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Investigating a group facilitation program:
Support and mentoring of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youth in Israel.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

In recent years, we have witnessed a growing awareness that educational practitioners need support and training in both pedagogical and emotional areas. Teachers who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths do not have professional training and support. Hence, this study explores a group facilitation program designed to support and mentor teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israel. This study has been conducted by the mixed methods approach, with a continuous explanatory planning, characterized by collection and analysis of qualitative data at the first stage. The data have been collected by a semi-structured interview of 17 teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in a technological high school supervised by the Welfare and Education Services of the Israeli Ministry of Education. At the second stage, quantitative data have been collected through questionnaires administered to 202 teachers: 96 teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in technological high schools supervised by the Welfare and Education Services of the Israeli Ministry of Education, and 106 teachers trained for mainstream education who work in mainstream high schools supervised by the Israeli Ministry of Education. At the third and last stage, qualitative data have been collected from personal reflective diaries written by 15 teachers. Most of these teachers are trained for mainstream education and work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in a technological high school supervised by the Welfare and Education Services of the Israeli Ministry of Education. The research findings show that teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in a technological high school supervised by the Welfare and Education Services of the Israeli Ministry of Education, experience pedagogical challenges and emotional issues in teaching due to the work with a population characterized by unique and personal needs and features. The findings also indicate challenges related to the system and to the establishment of a relationship with at-risk learners. Moreover, the findings show that a group support and mentoring program contributes to these teachers from a pedagogical, emotional, personal and staff-oriented perspective. This has led to the building of the SMT-YaR model that constitutes a group facilitating program offering support and mentoring to teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths. The program offers support and mentoring of pedagogical challenges, emotional issues, systemic challenges, and challenges in establishing a relationship with at-risk learners. Since all over the world teachers work with at-risk and socially excluded youths, any education system can apply this model. Furthermore, this program can be used by education systems that wish to support the teachers in accordance with their needs.

Keywords: at-risk and socially excluded youths, technological high schools supervised by the Ministry of Education, pedagogical challenges in teaching, emotional issues in teaching.

INTRODUCTION

This study explored a group facilitation program that offered support and mentoring to teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths.

Problem Statement and Gap in Knowledge

There are some gaps in knowledge that justify an investigation of a group facilitation program that supports and mentors the teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in these educational frameworks in Israel. First, in Israel, teachers of at-risk and socially excluded youths do not have professional training and support (Cohen-Navot et al., 2001; Razer & Friedman, 2020). Moreover, the empirical literature does not discuss a support and mentoring program that is unique for teachers and focuses on the pedagogical, emotional, systemic needs, and on the establishment of a relationship with at-risk learners, as findings of this study show. There are but a few studies that engage in the pedagogical challenges of teachers who work with at-risk populations and, as a result, education systems find it difficult to respond to these challenges. Hence, great importance is attributed to the development of a group facilitation program that offers support and mentoring to teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths. Such a program can provide a response that is adapted to the teachers and, thus, can reduce their challenges, improving their professional achievements that, in turn, enhance the learners' attainments and the educational framework accomplishments.

Research Aims

The research aims of the present study are:

1. To identify pedagogical challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.
2. To identify emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

3. To explore the pedagogical challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

4. To explore the emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education

5. To compare the pedagogical challenges and emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, and the pedagogical challenges and emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education**.**

6. To explore the contribution of a group facilitation program to pedagogical challenges and emotional issues among teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

Research Questions

The research questions of the present study are:

1. What are the pedagogical challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?

2. What are the emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?

3. What are the pedagogical challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?

4. What are the emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?

5. What are the commonalities and differences regarding pedagogical challenges and emotional issues between teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the

supervision of the Ministry of Education, and teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?

6. How does a group facilitation program based on support and mentoring enhance the pedagogical challenges and emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education working with at-risk youth and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?

Theoretical Framework

Adolescence and Risk

The term 'adolescence' originates in Latin, namely, growing towards maturity (Rothstein, 2012). Flum (1995) defined this age as a transition from childhood to maturity. Adolescence is characterized by an increase in states of mental stress (Larson & Ham, 1993). This age group is vulnerable following a developmental process that has not been completed from a cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional aspects (Magen, 1998). From a personal and social point of view these adolescents depend on their parents (Vercruysse & Chandler, 1992). As a result, they have not yet developed coping resources of their own and are still inexperienced and this turns them into more vulnerable (Heisel, Ream, Raitz, Rappaport, & Coddington, 1973).

Emotions in Teaching

Definition of the term "emotions"

Emotions are natural reactions to meaningful events (Ben-Zeev, 2011) that people experience and react to subjectively in relation to their mental situation and way of thinking (Kaniel, 2013; Lazarus & Lazarus, 2001; Zembylas, 2005). These emotional reactions are accompanied by physical reactions, such as facial expressions and body language (Lazarus & Lazarus, 2001). There are also physiological reactions, such as accelerated heart rate, perspiration, and higher blood pressure, indicating an emotional distress (Van Veen, Sleegers, & van de Ven, 2005).

Intervention Model according to the Psycho-Social Approach for Teachers Who Work with At-Risk Youths

The psycho-social educational approach links different disciplines from the field of philosophy, psychology, sociology and education. Moreover, it integrates basic terms,

methods, strategies, and applied instruments for promoting the educational practice at school, among at-risk children and youths, and the parents. This approach takes into consideration the partners to the practice, i.e., teachers and educational caregivers. It aims to train them from a personal and professional aspect, in order to provide instruments to at-risk students so they can overcome the different obstacles that they face and be integrated in the life of school, maximally materializing their capabilities (Mor, 1997, 2003).

Support and Mentoring Groups for Teachers of At-Risk and Socially Excluded Youths

According to Rosenwasser & Nathan (1997), a group consists of several people (three and more) that the nature of reference between them distinguishes them from all the others. Rosenwasser & Nathan (1997) added that this group is an entity that can be formed in a spontaneous or planned manner, when three people or more have a joint perceptional space, mutual internal representation, to which are added inter-dependence, emotional relationships, and interactions.

Conceptual Framework

The ultimate goal of this study was to develop a conceptual framework that would shed light on the pedagogical challenges and emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths and on the contribution of a group facilitation and mentoring program for these teachers.
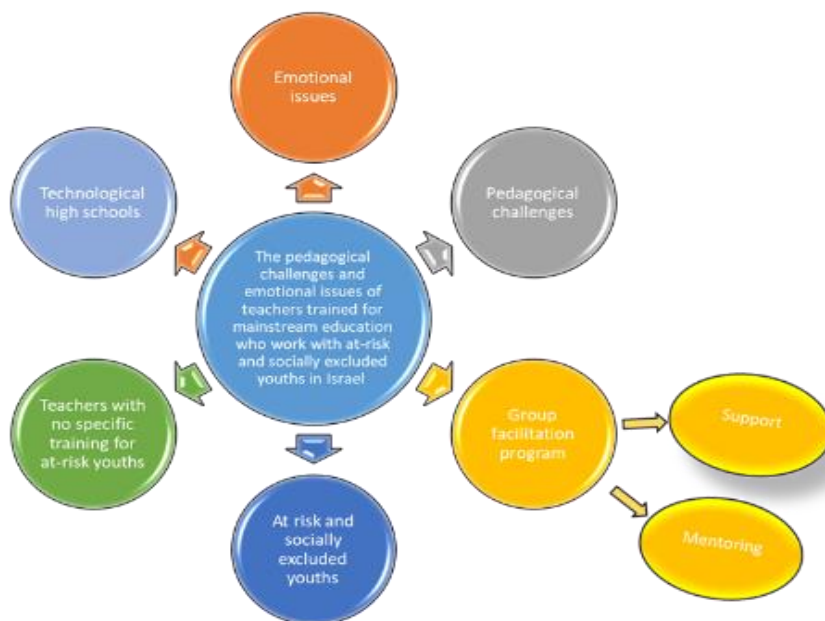
Figure No. 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure No. 1 describes the conceptual framework of this study and the relation between the key concepts underpinning it. The conceptual framework was derived from the existing theories and the review of the existing literature that served as the basis for this study.

In Israel, at-risk children and youths are defined as children and youths who live in situations that put them at risk in their family and their environment. These situations undermine their ability to actualize their rights in seven areas of life: 1. Physical, existence, health and development; 2. Belonging to the family and taking care of the child; 3. learning and acquisition of competences; 4. Well-being and emotional health; 5. Sense of belonging and social integration; 6. Protection from others; 7. Protection from risky behaviors (Schmid, 2006). In the fields of learning difficulties and acquisition of skills, sense of belonging and integration in society, at-risk and socially excluded youths are characterized as experiencing academic difficulties and gaps, as well as difficulties of adjusting to frameworks. These difficulties are manifested by alienation and dropout from the education system (Etzion, 2010).

For that purpose, the Israeli Ministry of Education implemented programs in all the formal education institutions under the supervision of the Education and Welfare Services section, and informal education framework supervised by the Ministry of Labor and Welfare. These programs were designed for at-risk children and youths in order to prevent and reduce dropout and academic gaps. Part of these programs in the formal education under the supervision of the Education and Welfare Services section were the technological education centers that integrated a theoretical and vocational learning (Ministry of Education, 2021).

In these frameworks, teachers who worked with at-risk and socially excluded population had no training or professional support (Cohen-Navot et al., 2001; Razer & Friedman, 2020). Thus, the teachers encountered pedagogical and emotional difficulties in the course of their work. This resulted in the design of a group facilitation program that aimed to support and mentor teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths, responding to the teachers' professional challenges.

A Group Facilitation Program: Support and Mentoring of Teachers Trained for Mainstream Education Who Work with At-Risk and Socially Excluded Youths in Israel

The rationale underpinning the group facilitation program is that teachers who work with at-risk youths' encounter difficulties in their teaching, including pedagogical challenges as well as emotional issues. Furthermore, those teachers who work with at-risk youths, but have never received special training for teaching this kind of learner population, experience burnout, frustration and, eventually, might drop out of the education system all together. Consequently, and based on the empirical literature (Kinman, Wray, & Strange, 2011; Levin Brown, 2011; Ovadia, 2014; Razer & Friedman, 2020), those teachers may need support and mentoring in order to address the pedagogical challenges and emotional issues so that they can adapt their teaching and achieve better results. Thus, according to the aims and questions of this study, a group facilitation program was developed for the purpose of supporting and mentoring teachers in the education system.

Aims of the program

1. Support and mentoring of teaching from a personal-professional point of view for teachers trained to work with mainstream populations who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths.
2. Support and mentoring of teaching from a pedagogical point of view for teachers trained to work with mainstream populations who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths.
3. Support and mentoring of teaching from an emotional point of view for teachers trained to work with mainstream populations who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths.
4. Support and mentoring of teaching from a team-oriented point of view for teachers trained to work with mainstream populations who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths.

During the program sessions, the participants presented their teaching challenges from a pedagogical, emotional and team-oriented perspective and these challenges were discussed during the program sessions.

The program stages and sessions

1, Acquaintance and coordination of expectations.

2. From a pedagogical point of view: providing teaching instruments, skills and strategies – comprehension and structuring of a 3-year individual syllabus for each student, according to the exam units of the discipline and submission dates.

3. From a pedagogical point of view: providing teaching instruments, skills and strategies – comprehension and structuring of a yearly individual syllabus, divided into months and derived from the 3-year syllabus.

4. From an emotional point of view: airing of feelings – conducting a discourse about the participants' feelings that result from their teaching challenges, as well as getting the group members' support.

5. From an emotional point of view: an instrument for coping emotionally – E.I.R.T. Model.

6. From a pedagogical point of view: providing teaching instruments, skills and strategies – comprehension and planning of a lesson plan adapted to the learner population.

7. From a pedagogical point of view: instruments for establishing a relationship with the learners – instruments for creating an educational dialogue with at-risk youths and creating a dialogue in spite of the students' refusal to take part in it (Mor and Mendelsohn, 2006).

8. From a pedagogical point of view: instruments for establishing a relationship with the learners – using crises as a strategy for creating a dialogue of growth and development (Mor & Mendelsohn, 2006).

9. From a team-oriented point of view: a regular team meeting as an instrument for building uniformity and unity in the team, based on collaboration and team work.

10. Closing session and leaving the program.

At the end of the sessions, as part of the closing session, the participants submitted their reflective diaries to the researcher for the purpose of analyzing the data.

CHAPTER I: METHODOLOGY

I.1 Research Paradigm: Mixed Methods Approach

This is a mixed method research, integrating the two major paradigms in social and education sciences, namely both quantitative and qualitative approaches in one study. In such a study, the data are collected sequentially, and involve the integration of the data in the process of research (Creswell, Plano Clark & Garrett, 2008). Thus, it limits the disadvantages of each research paradigm, using the advantages of each approach in order to yield a deep and better research picture (Small, 2011). A quantitative and qualitative integration provides a richer and in-depth look at the investigated phenomenon. This study aimed to investigate a group facilitation program that supported and mentored teachers who had been trained in mainstream education and who work with at-risk and socially included youth in Israel. Hence, the mixed method research approach was chosen.

I.2 Research Design: Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design

Table No. I.1: Summary of the research design

Stage	Research Aims	Research Questions	Research Hypotheses	Research Variables	Research Participants	Research instrument	Analysis method
Study 1: Qualitative research	1. To identify pedagogical challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.	1. What are the pedagogical challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?	1. It will be found that teachers who work with at risk and socially excluded youths will experience pedagogical challenges (Razer, 2009; Razer & Friedman, 2020).		17 teachers working in schools for at risk youth.	Semi-structured interviews	Content analysis
	2. To identify emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.	2. What are the emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?	2. It will be found that teachers who work with at risk and socially excluded youths will experience emotional issues in their teaching (Mendelsohn & Yehezkel, 2016; Razer, 2009; Wróbel, 2013; Razer & Friedman, 2020).				

Study 2: Quantitative research	1. To identify pedagogical challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.	1. What are the pedagogical challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?	1. Teachers in high schools for at-risk youths will report more pedagogical challenges than teachers in a mainstream high schools.	1. Dependent variables: Pedagogical challenges Independent variable: Type of population: - Teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths. - Teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools.	96 teachers who work with at-risk youths	Original close-ended questionnaire	Statistics
	2. To identify emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.	2. What are the emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?	2. Teachers in high schools for at-risk youths will report more emotional issues than teachers in a mainstream high schools.				
	3. To explore the pedagogical challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.	3. What are the pedagogical challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?		2. Dependent variables: Emotional issues Independent variable: Type of population: - Teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and	106 teachers who work in mainstream high school education	Original close-ended questionnaire	Statistics
	4. To explore the emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.	4. What are the emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?					

	5. To compare the pedagogical challenges and emotional issues between teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, and the pedagogical challenges and emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.	5. What are the commonalities and differences regarding pedagogical challenges and emotional issues between teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?		socially excluded youths. - Teachers trained for mainstream education who work in Israeli mainstream high schools.	202 teachers all together.	Original close-ended questionnaire	Statistics
Study 3: Qualitative research	1. To explore the contribution of group facilitation to pedagogical challenges and emotional issues among teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.	1. How does a group facilitation based on support and mentoring enhance the pedagogical challenges and emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education working with at-risk youth and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?	1. It will be found that a group facilitation based on support and mentoring will contribute to emotional issues of teachers working with at-risk and socially excluded youths (Ben-Asher & Bokek-Cohen, 2018; Razer & Friedman, 2020). 2. It will be found that a group facilitation based on support and mentoring will		15 teachers who work with at-risk youths	Documents - Personal reflective diaries	Content analysis - Narralizer

			contribute to pedagogical challenges of teachers working with at-risk and socially excluded youths (Ovadia, 2014).				

CHAPTER II: FINDINGS

II.1 Findings emerging from study 1: Challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli Technological high schools

Table No. II.1: Sample of Findings emerging from study I

Theme 1 Perception of teaching, educational work and challenges among teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths	Theme 2 Findings obtained from research question No. 1- What are the pedagogical challenges of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?	Theme 3 Findings obtained from research question No. 2- What are the emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths in Israeli technological high schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education?	Theme 4 Systemic challenges faced by teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths	Theme 5 Establishing a personal relationship with the learners as at-risk youths, their challenge and their contribution
"In a word - a vocation. In a bit more - a challenge, a satisfaction- Unequivocal holy worship".	1. Adjusting Teaching methods to the learners: *"Everyone is Different"*	1. Helplessness: *"There is, sometimes, a sense of helplessness"*	1. Un-adapted teacher training: *"The courses in school remained at the word level and did not really come to effective work practices".*	*"I would define him as a heart and the rest are boundaries and instruments for life".*
	2. Coping with the students' learning difficulties: *"Classrooms are very heterogeneous and consist of students with many and varied difficulties".*	2. Frustration: *"Teaching work is accompanied by frustration".*	2. Lack of qualified teachers for working with at-risk youth: *"My professional training is the University of Life".*	
	3. Difficulties in motivating the students to learn: *"The motivation for learning is very low"*	3. Loneliness, detachment and no sense of belonging: *"In my early years at school it was very difficult to feel disconnected, to feel unaffiliated, so many times I felt lonely".*	3. Difficulties in teamwork: *"Sometimes I think the professional staff at the school is a group of teachers at risk"*	

II.2 Findings emerging from study 2: Comparison of Pedagogical Challenges and Emotional Issues of Teachers Trained for Mainstream Education Who Work with Different Populations
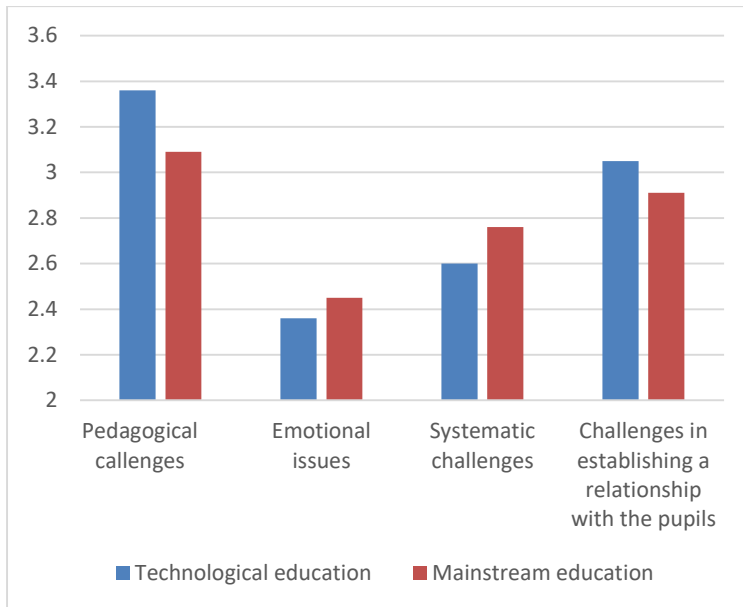

Figure No. II.1: Comparison of the groups in the general indices

II.3 Integrative Findings emerging from Study 1 & 2

Table No. II.2: Integrative findings emerging from study 1 & 2

Pedagogical challenges	Emotional issues	Systemic challenges	challenges of establishing a relationship with at-risk learners
1. In teaching resulting from learners' truancy and dropout. 2. In teaching manifested by adjusting the teaching methods to students with learning disabilities and learning difficulties. 3. In teaching involving the students' motivation to learn. 4. In teaching following learners' disciplinary and behavioral problems.	1. Emotional labor. 2. Fatigue and professional burnout. 3. Emotional fatigue defined also as compassion fatigue.	1. Lack of support 2. Professional training.	The relationship of teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded populations was, on the one hand, meaningful and was based on a close and containing relation. On the other hand, it was challenging due to the blurring of the boundaries as a result of this closeness and the difficulty of setting clear boundaries.

II.4 Findings emerging from study 3: Contribution of a group facilitation and mentoring program for teachers who have not received professional training and who work in a high school for at-risk youths

Table No. II.3: Findings emerging from study 3

Theme 1 Contribution of the group facilitation and mentring program from a personal aspect	Theme 2 Qualitative findings obtained from research question No. 1		Theme 3 Contribution of a group facilitation and mentoring program from a team-oriented aspect
	Categories		
	Emotional aspect	Pedagogical aspect	
a. Development of the self and professional "I" from a reflective thinking aspect: *"A multitude of opinions always helps in shaping a professional self"*	a. Emotional identification: *"From an emotional point of view I identified with the topics that were raised"*	a. Sharing difficulties and presenting instruments for coping: *"The group discussion made me realize that there are solutions that can minimize the difficulties of both the learners and the teachers"*	a. Consolidation and deep acquaintance: *"Group facilitation and mentoring helps a lot in the group consolidation and deepening of the acquaintance"*
b. Development of the self and professional "I" from an intellectual aspect: *"Each session contributes to me and enriches my knowledge"*	b. Airing of feelings: *"I felt this was the right place for airing the feelings that were evoked in me"*	b. Presenting innovative teaching methods, skills, and strategies: *"Due to the mentoring I feel that I can learn more and improve my teaching with new and effective teaching methods and this can make it easier for the learners"*	b. Team-oriented nurturing: *"There was a nurturing discourse of the team"*
c. Development of the self and professional "I" from the welf-image viewpoint: *"I feel confident when I learn new things that help me develop in my daily work"*	c. Emotional support: *"The group supports and helps me to express my feelings"*	c. Order and organization: *"The session contributed to a real order"*	

CHAPTER III: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMANDATIONS

III.1 Factual Conclusions

The findings of this study illustrated a need for a group facilitation program that would offer support and mentoring to teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths. As far as the pedagogical challenges were concerned, due to the unique and personal characteristics of the learner population, a group facilitation program for teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths was characterized by pedagogical support and mentoring. Regarding the emotional issues in teaching, since the teachers who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths had

no professional training, they experienced multiple emotional issues in their work. Hence, a group facilitation program for teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths, should be characterized by emotional support and mentoring. Coping with guilt feelings, a low sense of self-efficacy for teaching, helplessness, ingratitude on the part of the students and their parents, emotional investment in teaching, fatigue and burnout in teaching, as well as compassion fatigue in teaching.

III.2 Conceptual Conclusions - Support and Mentoring for Teachers Who Work with At-Risk Youth – the SMT-YaR model

The findings of this research allowed promoting a model of a group facilitation program. This program offered support and mentoring to teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths: pedagogical, emotional, and systemic aspects and the inter-personal relationship with at-risk learners. This model is presented in Figure No. III.1.
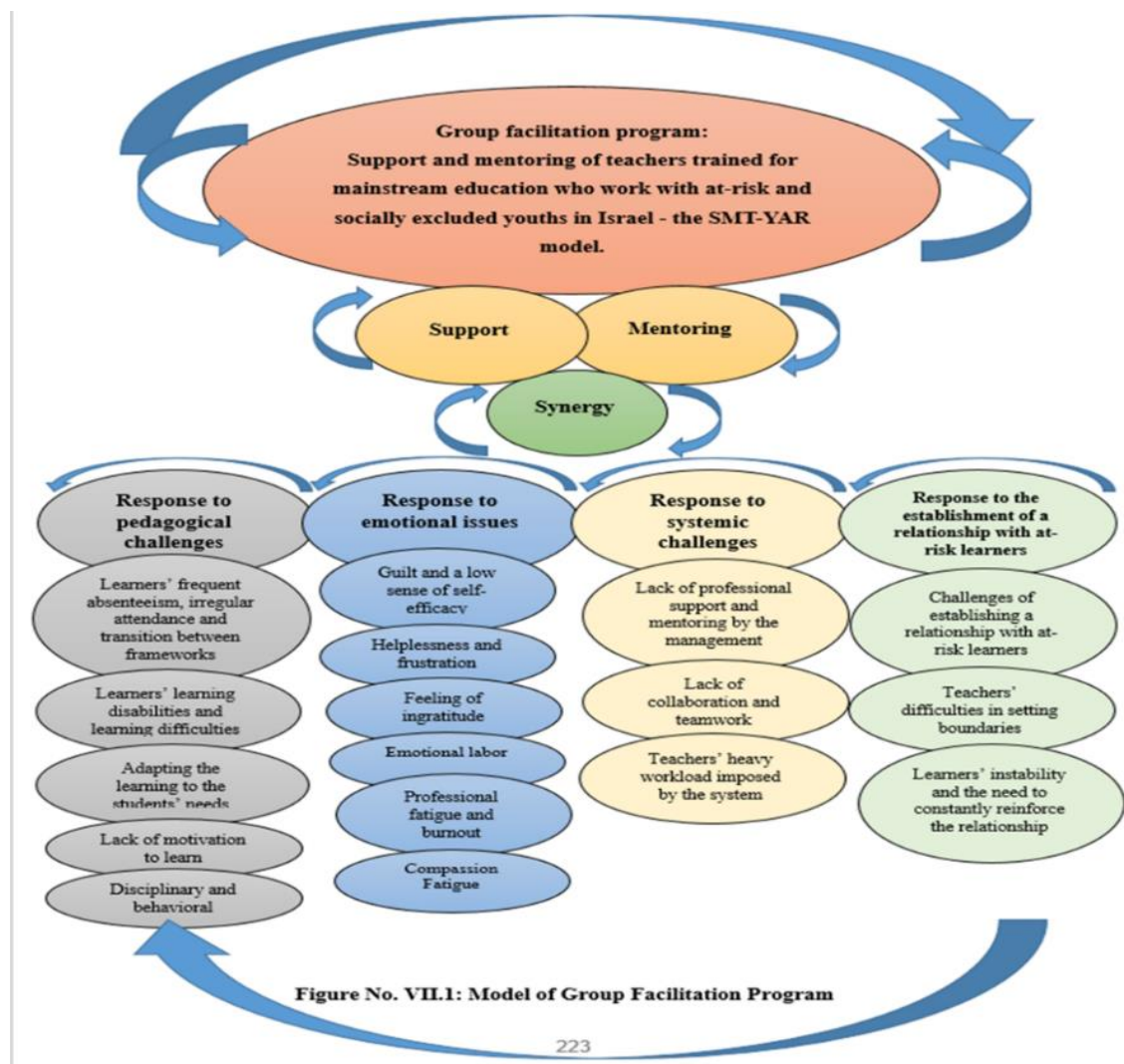

Figure No. VII.1: Model of Group Facilitation Program

223

16

Figure No. III.1: Model of Group Facilitation Program

Figure No. IV.1 presented a model obtained from the research findings of this study. This model depicted a group facilitation program that offered support and mentoring to teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths. The program was based on pedagogical, emotional, and systemic aspects and the inter-personal relationship with at-risk learners. In the group facilitation program, the support and mentoring enabled teachers who had no professional training to cope with the challenges involved in the teaching of at-risk youths.

In the pedagogical aspect, the teachers did not have instruments, skills, and teaching strategies adapted to work with populations that had unique and personal features. Consequently, the teachers found it difficult to provide a response that was adjusted to their students. This was manifested by problems of bridging academic gaps due to absenteeism, irregular attendance, and transition between frameworks; promotion of students with learning disabilities and learning difficulties due to the lack of instruments for building diagnostic contents; difficulties in promoting students who had no motivation to learn; and difficulties manifested by lack of instruments for coping with discipline and behavior problems.

These pedagogical difficulties evoked emotional issues among the teachers. This study illustrated that teaching involved many emotional experiences for those engaged in it. Moreover, teachers who worked with at-risk populations, coped with many more emotional experiences due to the job requirements, manifested by caring and identifying with the youths and containing the problems with which they had to deal. All these evoked professional fatigue and burnout, and exposure to the students' suffering and failures caused compassion fatigue.

In the systemic aspect, this study showed that the education system did not professionally tutored and supported teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk youths. Consequently, they experienced pedagogical challenges and emotional issues and had to comply with the system's numerous demands that created a heavy workload. This workload undermined the relationships between the teaching staffs because they were not always available. As a result, the staff work and collaboration with the staff members was harmed.

The model developed in this study illustrated that the pedagogical, emotional, systemic aspects and those associated with the establishment of a relationship with the students, were interrelated. Hence, the facilitation program suggested that when these aspects were addressed among the teachers, the teachers received acknowledgement, support, and instruments for

coping with these difficuties. This resulted in a synergy that enabled the teachers to receive group support and instruments for dealing with these difficulties. Moreover, the findings showed that this was a humanistic model that put the teachers and their needs at its center. It was also an adapted modular but also an integrative model, combining several challenges in the different aspects and the response to them.

It is noteworthy that this model of a group facilitation program that offered support and mentoring, was relevant to the teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with mainstream population. This study demonstrated that these teachers faced challenges that were almost identical to those of teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths. Moreover, this model was relevant to systemic assimilation during times of crisis, when systemic changes transpired and might have affected the professional staff, as well as their customers.

III.3 Practical Implications

III.3.1 Ministry of Education

a. Allocate resources in order to promote curricula in academic institutions for the purpose of complementing a professional training that provides adapted and efficient instruments, competences, and teaching strategies to teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded populations.

b. Promote courses in institutions of professional development and professional training, providing adapted and efficient instruments, competences, and teaching strategies to teachers trained for mainstream education who work with at-risk and socially excluded populations.

c. Promote workshops in professional development institutions that will implement group facilitation programs for supporting and mentoring teachers in the course of their work.

d. Economically finance schools that will facilitate employment of a professional/professionals for supporting and mentoring the professional staff at school throughout the year.

III.3.2 Principals

A. Assimilate at school courses as part of the school in-service training courses that deal with the topic of at-risk and socially excluded youths during the academic year.

B. Provide support and lend an attentive ear to the needs of the teaching staff, as well as reduce the demands that burden the teachers in their work.

C. Make an effective use of the economic budget and hire a professional/professionals who will support and mentor the professional staff at school throughout the year. In case the school has no funds for that the principal, together with the educational counsellor and pedagogical coordinator at school, should assimilate a group facilitation program for teachers, offering them support and mentoring.

III.3.3 Teachers

a) Join professional development programs in academic institutions that offer a professional development about challenging and innovative topics.

b) Maintain relationships based on collaboration and peer learning.

c) Share with the principal/educational counsellor/pedagogical coordinator the difficulties encountered during the teaching practice, so that they can provide an adapted response and support.

III.4 Strengths and Limitations of This Study

This study had some points of strength but it also has several limitations that should be taken into consideration. The first and major point of strength of this study was the choice of the mixed methods approach as the research paradigm. Using both the quantitative and qualitative methods enabled a more comprehensive assessment of the research, compared to the use of one method only. The second point of strength was the use of a homogeneous purposeful sample during all the research stages, in order to collect a wide variety of teachers' experiences and, thus, represent multiple views. The third point of strength was manifested at the second, quantitative stage of this study. This stage was conducted all over the country and, therefore, one could say that the sample represented a nation-wide picture.

Nevertheless, this study had also several limitations. The first limitation was the research population. This study was conducted among two teacher populations. One population consisted of teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially

excluded youths in state-technological high schools under the supervision of the Welfare and Education Services of the Israeli Ministry of Education. The second population comprised teachers trained for mainstream education who worked in state mainstream high schools under the supervision of the Israeli Ministry of Education. It is important to investigate also teachers who work in technological high schools as well as mainstream high schools in the Arab and religious sectors in Israel. Moreover, there is an option of examining these teachers in educational frameworks that are not supervised by the Ministry of Education.

III.5 Contribution to Knowledge

III.5.1 Contribution to theoretical knowledge

The SMT-YaR model, based on findings of this study, contributed to the empirical literature and to the field of research in several ways. It enriched the existing knowledge regarding the pedagogical challenges and emotional issues among teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths. These pedagogical challenges and emotional issues were due to the unique and personal characteristics of the students. Additional innovative knowledge to the empirical literature and to the field of research engaged in the contribution of a group facilitation support and mentoring program for teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths from the personal-professional perspective. This enhanced the development of the reflective-intellectual thinking and the self-image of the teachers.

Furthermore, the development of the model on the basis of the findings of this study was innovative, since the empirical literature does not present a support and mentoring program for teachers, focusing on their pedagogical and emotional needs. Consequently, this model encompassed a new way of thinking about the support and mentoring of teachers who worked with at-risk youths and did not receive a designated training for this field. The contribution to the theoretical knowledge was in the pedagogical area (Razar, 2009; Razer & Friedman, 2020); emotional area (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014; Dvir & Ben-David, 2011; Lee, Patterson, & Vega, 2011; Mendelsohn & Yehezkel, 2016; Razar, 2009; Razer & Friedman, 2020; Zur, 2001); systemic area (Cohen-Navot et al., 2001; Razar, 2009; Razer & Friedman, 2020); and establishing a relationship with at-risk learners (Razer & Friedman, 2020; Rom 2017). All these demonstrated the challenges faced by the teachers, and a response to the challenges would reduce them.

III.5.2 Contribution to practical knowledge

The model of the group facilitation support and mentoring program for teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths contributed to the practical knowledge. It proposed a program of support and mentoring concerning pedagogical challenges, emotional issues, systemic challenges, and challenges of establishing a relationship with at-risk learners. The well-organized program can serve education systems that are interested in supporting the teachers. Thus, they can enhance the achievements of the teachers, attainments of the learners, and promotion of the educational framework.

III.5.3 Contribution to methodological knowledge

Three original research instruments were developed in this study and they could be used in future studies. At the first stage of this study, a semi-structure interview was developed, based on the empirical literature and the researcher's professional experience. It was submitted for validation purposes to five experts and was approved by the supervisor of this research. The interview consisted of 19 questions for teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk and socially excluded youths. The questions aimed to explore the teachers' professional perception of teaching and their professional challenges. This interview can serve worldwide education systems that wish to identify the difficulties faced by teachers who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths.

III.6 Future Studies

This study explored the pedagogical challenges and emotional issues of teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk youths in state-technological high schools supervised by the Welfare and Education Services of the Ministry of Education. In order to obtain a more comprehensive picture, these topics can be investigated in additional frameworks in the Arab and religious sectors under the supervision of the Welfare and Education Services, as well as in frameworks of the Jewish, Arab, and Religious sectors under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor.

Furthermore, this study investigated the group facilitation program that offered support and mentoring to teachers trained for mainstream education who worked with at-risk youths in state-technological high schools supervised by the Welfare and Education Services of the Ministry of Education. The program was implemented in a single high school at the north of

the country. In order to obtain a more comprehensive picture, the program can be examined in additional frameworks in Israel, under the supervision of both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor, as well as in frameworks of the different sectors.

III.7 Importance of this study - Universality

This study is important due to its universal contribution. The universality is demonstrated by the fact that all over the world teachers work with at-risk and socially excluded youths. Thus, any education system can use the model of the group facilitation program that offers support and mentoring to teachers who work with at-risk and socially excluded youths, providing a response to the teachers' difficulties. A preliminary survey can be performed in different countries in order to check where and what the problems are. Based on the findings, a group facilitation program can be built for the purpose of supporting and mentoring teachers who work with at-risk youths, adapting it to the teachers' difficulties.

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