PERCEPTIONS OF THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION AMONG RELIGIOUS TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN ISRAEL

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Abstract

This research examines the purposes of education perceived by teacher education students preparing for a career in Israeli public religious schools. Participants were 164 men and 364 women in their first or final year of teacher education. They responded to questionnaires that explored educational purposes in four ways. Twenty-four students also were interviewed. Major results indicate that: 1) universal and religious purposes of education are considered highly important; 2) men attribute greater importance than women to religious-Torah purposes; 3) academic-intellectual growth is not considered an important educational purpose. Implications of these and other findings are considered for educational policy and practice in public religious schools.

This report is based on a comprehensive investigation of the religious, social, and educational thoughts and beliefs of students in seven Israeli colleges that prepare teachers for careers in elementary and junior high "public religious" schools serving families that observe Jewish religious practice. While some research has been conducted to learn about the social attitudes of these prospective educators (Auron 1999), no systematic effort has been made to examine their thoughts and beliefs regarding teaching and the teacher role. Yet, as recent

research has demonstrated (e.g., Putnam and Borko 2000), these may be critical to their development as teachers and may significantly affect the quality of their teaching.

Motivation for conducting this study stemmed from several sources, all dealing with important educational and religious trends in Israel and elsewhere. Two of these will be described in order to provide an appropriate frame for interpreting the research results. Prior to that we will present information on the Israeli educational system that will facilitate understanding of these issues. In particular, focus will be on those changes in public religious education in Israel that are intended to improve preservice teachers' pedagogical and subject matter knowledge.

Formal public education in Israel differs in several important ways for four different sectors of the population who study in separate educational systems. Among Jewish students, the largest number is registered in the "general public" sector where education is supposed to be geared to the entire citizenry regardless of the religious beliefs and practices of individual students. In fact, the vast majority of students are from secular homes or from families who may value Jewish tradition but are non-observant.

Religious subject matter is not taught, although it is important to note that the close relationship between Jewish culture and the Jewish religion (e.g., Sharan and Birnbaum 1999) leads to the study of certain subjects that are closely linked to Judaism. Examples of this include instruction of the scriptures as a required academic subject, although they are studied as historical and cultural writings, and the observance of Jewish holidays in school, albeit as national or cultural events, not as religious ones.

There is also the "public-religious" sector serving about twenty percent of the Jewish children. Most of these students come from modern Orthodox homes. The curriculum includes the usual academic subjects and special religious subjects, such as Jewish Law. Educational policy in this sector rests on the assumption that all teachers, regardless of the subject matter they teach, affect the religious development of students. Accordingly, religious teachers are preferred and indeed a large majority of teachers in this sector are religiously observant. Also, the educational climate of schools in this sector reflects its religious nature, for example by means of modest dress codes for students and teachers and the observance of Jewish religious ritual in school.

Members of a third Jewish group send their children to the "independent" system where religious studies occupy a dominant position and secular subjects are studied fewer hours and less intensively. In general, more stringent religious standards are upheld here and the educational climate reflects a certain uneasiness with modernity and a tendency to avoid full integration in Israeli society.

The fourth sector serves the mostly Moslem Arab population of Israel. Its curriculum reflects the special character of the student body and includes secular subjects similar to those in the Jewish systems as well as unique topics.

Each of these four sectors hosts separate tertiary level teacher education institutions. Most teacher education graduates move on to teaching careers in schools aligned with the sector where they themselves received their elementary or secondary education and where they earned their teacher certification.

Public religious education in Israel has been under considerable strain in recent years. Two reasons for this pressure are especially pertinent to this study. First, numerous private elementary schools serving religiously observant populations have opened in response to some parents' desire for higher academic standards, more careful observance of Jewish ritual, and greater school emphasis on Jewish studies. Frequently, children drawn to these private schools are successful students who come from families that are well established economically and socially. Their departure can negatively affect the religious ambiance in public religious schools as well as the academic accomplishments of the remaining students (Schwarzwald 1990). Second, some students formerly attending public religious schools have been attracted by schools sponsored by the *Shas* political movement. These schools are part of the independent system but cater especially to the children of ethnic Sepharadi families. Since well more than half of the students in the public religious system are from Sepharadi origin (e.g., Leslau and Rich 2000), there has been a great deal of concern about their mass defection from public religious schools.

Responses to these and other tensions have taken several forms. Two are associated with teacher education and are particularly relevant to this study. First, preservice primary school teacher education has been upgraded throughout Israel in recent years. It is now a four-year academic college program, and a fifth year internship is being implemented in many locales. Earlier it was a three-year curriculum offered at special teacher seminaries. Additionally, greater emphasis

now is placed on gaining advanced subject matter knowledge. In the public religious sector the largest and most prestigious teacher education colleges offer more extensive and more rigorous religious studies than was the norm earlier.

The primary goal of this general reform is to raise standards of preservice teacher education and ultimately to enhance the quality of instruction and schooling outcomes. This goal is especially significant for public religious education. As noted earlier, criticism of this sector has stemmed in part from a desire for higher academic standards. Also, relatively low academic achievement is common at *Shas* schools. Thus, improvements in the quality of preservice teacher education in the public religious sector should gratify parents' wishes to raise standards as well as widen the perceived differences between *Shas* and public religious schools.

A second response to the pressures on public religious education relates to the proliferation of *yeshivot hesder* and preservice teacher education institutes associated with them. *Yeshivot hesder* are educational institutions where male graduates of religious high schools combine their military duty with extensive study of Talmud, Jewish Law, Jewish philosophy, and other religious sources. Typically students spend five years in the *hesder* program, including three and one-half years of full-time Jewish studies and eighteen months of military duty. *Yeshivot hesder* have existed in Israel for about thirty years and have earned a respected position in the modern religious community.

Following criticism leveled at the increased feminization of teaching (ninety percent of primary school teachers are women) and poor subject matter knowledge among teachers, policymakers in the public religious system joined forces with leaders of *yeshivot hesder* to address the criticism. A few teacher education institutes under the auspices of *yeshivot hesder* opened about a decade ago and today more than a dozen are in operation. Students interested in attending the institute add a sixth year to their yeshiva program and dedicate two days weekly in their fifth and sixth years to pedagogical studies. Since these students will teach religiously oriented subjects such as Talmud, Bible, and Jewish Law, the subject matter aspect of the teacher education program is covered by their religious studies in the *yeshivot hesder*. Thus, the largest part of their teacher education curriculum deals with pedagogy, the philosophy, psychology, and sociology of education, and supervised teaching. For most of these students, the teacher institute

component of their education is of secondary importance as compared to their religious studies.

Graduates of the teacher institutes of *yeshivot hesder* who enter the elementary school classroom can provide a powerful response to some of the pressures on the public religious system mentioned above. These beginning teachers usually have greater mastery of religious subjects than do other graduates of preservice teacher education programs and they often are more devout in their religious observance. Another positive element is that they provide boys in the class with positive role models. Thus, if several graduates of *yeshivot hesder* teacher institutes are staff members of a public religious school, its headmaster can claim convincingly that the level of religious subject matter knowledge among teachers and the religious climate of the school differ very little from that of private religious schools. This could decrease significantly the defection of students to private and to *Shas* schools as well as raise academic standards.

These two changes in teacher education—the upgrading of preservice teacher education and the proliferation of teacher institutes associated with *yeshivot hesder*—served as the backdrop for this study of the religious, social, and educational thoughts and beliefs of male and female students in religious teacher colleges and teacher institutes. This article focuses on educational aspects of the study with special attention to understanding the beliefs of these teacher education students regarding the purposes of education for their students.

Focus in this research on the thoughts and beliefs of teacher education students is consonant with a major paradigmatic shift that has characterized the investigation of teaching and teacher education over the last twenty years. Teacher personality was the focus of study in the early days of this research based on the assumption that the teacher's personality determines the nature and quality of instruction and that certain personality characteristics are superior to others. After contributing somewhat to our understanding of teaching it was replaced by the process/product research paradigm that was based on behaviorist thinking. The central claim of this approach was that the teacher's classroom behavior is the primary determinant of student progress and that some behaviors yield positive outcomes while others lead to negative results. Much research was conducted based on this approach and a fair amount of progress was made toward understanding instructional dynamics. Nevertheless, limitations of this model led to a search for more robust explanations.

Following the "cognitive revolution" in psychology and education about two decades ago, much of the modern research on teaching deals with teachers' cognitions—thoughts and beliefs (e.g., Shulman 1986). Proponents of this model assert that an understanding of teacher cognitions serves as a "master switch" that enables insight into many aspects of teaching including classroom behavior. Furthermore, it is assumed that our ability to understand teacher thinking also should facilitate improved teacher functioning. It is noteworthy that some research on religious education also has followed this model (e.g., Johnson-Siebold 1994).

This new research approach is also apparent in the study of teacher education, both pre- and in-service (Putnam and Borko 2000; Richardson 1996; Tatoo 1998; Zeichner 1999). Research concentrates on uncovering the pedagogical thoughts and beliefs of neophytes and on understanding how they develop over time in response to educational experiences. We join many leading teacher educators in the belief that this model provides certain benefits over the two approaches mentioned earlier. The static nature of the teacher personality model did not encourage teacher improvement nor did it facilitate an understanding of processes of teacher change; and the process/product approach ignored the meanings and contexts of behavior, wrongly suggesting to student teachers that their job was to learn universally appropriate responses to classroom events.

Congruent with the trend to concentrate on teachers' cognitions, the present study examined the religious, social, and educational thoughts and beliefs of male and female teacher education students in seven religious teacher education institutions in Israel. As noted above this report focuses on their beliefs regarding the purposes of education. We were particularly interested in the goals teachers strive to achieve for their students because goal orientations affect, directly and indirectly, much of what happens in the classroom including issues such as curriculum choice, teaching methods, classroom organization, evaluation methods, and others (e.g., Lortie 1975; Rich and Almozlino 1999; Tatoo 1998). Furthermore, goal attainment may be a major source of teacher satisfaction while factors preventing their fulfillment can be a major cause of teacher frustration. Thus, understanding the purposes of education in the minds of these teacher education students can provide insight into their beliefs about teaching and the teacher role in the public religious educational setting.

METHOD

Students from seven religious teacher education institutions participated. Two four-year teacher colleges admitted women only. A third institution was a three-year teachers' seminar that enrolled over eighty percent women. Four *yeshivot hesder* served men only. One of these was an accredited four-year college and the other three were independent branches of this college. These institutions were chosen after discussions with Ministry supervisors of teacher education who directed the researchers to institutions that reflected characteristics of teacher education students nation-wide including degree of religiosity, socioeconomic status, and intellectual ability.

A total of 512 teacher education students responded to the questionnaires, 164 males and 348 females. Preliminary analyses revealed that the few men enrolled at the teachers' seminar differed in significant ways from those at the *yeshivot hesder*. Accordingly, we report on male students at *yeshivot hesder* only. Twenty-four teacher education students, thirteen women and eleven men, were interviewed in the qualitative part of the study. These students were nominated by college officials in response to our request for open, verbal, not atypical students who are capable of reflecting on their educational experiences and relating them to others. These students were chosen from a larger pool recommended due to the relative convenience of arranging an interview with them.

We also paid special attention to differences between beginning students and those on the verge of completing their pedagogical studies. This was based on the assumption that subtle changes may occur in the thinking and beliefs of teacher education students over the course of their professional education, particularly as a result of their early teaching experiences which are concentrated in the final year of preparation (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon 1998). There were 306 first year participants and 206 students in their final year of studies. It should be noted that for most *yeshivot hesder* students the first year of teacher education studies is their fourth year at the institution and the final year is their sixth year of study at the *yeshiva.* In the larger study, 231 teacher educators in the seven institutions also responded to the questionnaires.

The questionnaires comprised 130 questions, some of which were created for this study while others were adopted from existing instruments. Topics covered in the broader study were (in order of presen-

tation): demographic information; religious beliefs and behavior; educational ideology; attitudes toward public religious education; views on matters of contemporary concern; and evaluation of the teacher education program. In this report we focus on respondents' attitudes to public religious education because that is where items eliciting their educational goals appeared.

Educational purposes were examined in the questionnaire in four ways. First, we presented participants with a list of eleven schooling goals embraced by the public religious education system that appeared in its official and semi-official documents (e.g., Dagan, Label, and Greenbaum 1992; Goodman, Desberg, and Solberg 1996). Respondents were asked to record the importance of each goal on a six-point scale. Additionally, they were asked to indicate the two most important purposes of education from the list of goals. Factor analysis was conducted on the first set of data yielding three factors that we called: *universal goals* (examples: "to develop the abilities and interests of each student"; "preparing students who will be good productive citizens"); *religious and Torah goals* (examples: "preparing students who are careful in their religious observance"; "direct students to advanced Torah studies"); and *scholarship goals* (examples: "direct students to high-level academic studies"; "prepare broad-minded students who value general knowledge").

Goals also were examined indirectly in two ways. Participants were requested to rank six preferred characteristics of a public religious school graduate. These again reflected universal goals (example: "the graduate will realize his potential"), religious goals (example: "the graduate will observe commandments conscientiously"), and academic goals (example: "the graduate will gain broad general knowledge"). In addition, they ranked six desired characteristics of a teacher in the public religious education system. These included personal characteristics (example: "the teacher should be open and allow students to disagree"), professional characteristics (example: "the teacher should have excellent pedagogical skills"), and religious characteristics (example: "the teacher should be a "'person of the Torah'").

Similar questions were asked in the interviews though the format allowed for follow-up probes and clarifications. For example, participants were asked about the characteristics of "typical" public religious school graduates as well as those of "successful" graduates. There also were probes to understand the characteristics of students who the respondent felt would be considered "failures" in the public religious

system. The interviews also enabled deeper exploration into the perceived relationship between universal, religious, and academic goals, particularly whether they are seen as conflicting or complementary. Similarly, the perceived relationships among the preferred characteristics of public religious teachers were explored.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We now report results regarding the teacher education students' perceptions of the purposes of education. In Table 1 means and standard deviations are presented for perceptions of the importance of three goal areas among male and female teacher education students. Lower means indicate attribution of greater importance.

Both men and women deem universal goals most important while academic goals are least important, $F(1,2) = 5.75$, $p < .01$. Additionally, men viewed religious and Torah goals of education as close in importance to universal purposes while women saw them as less important, closer to academic goals. Indications emerged here of two themes that consistently reappear in the results: 1) men attribute more importance to religious and Torah purposes as compared to women and 2) both groups perceive academic and intellectual purposes of education as less important than other educational goals.

As noted earlier participants were asked to choose the two most important goals from the list of eleven purposes of education. Their responses appear in Table 2 in percentages.

Results of this method and the first analysis are similar for women. They clearly attributed most importance to universal purposes of edu-

TABLE 1. Importance of Purposes of Public Religious Education Among Male and Female Teacher Education Students

	Mean† (standard deviation) female n=348	Mean (standard deviation) male n=142
Universal purposes	1.34 (0.61)	1.47 (0.69)
Religious and Torah purposes	1.76 (0.86)	1.62 (0.80)
Academic purposes	2.02 (0.87)	2.30 (1.00)

†Lower means indicate greater importance

cation, followed quite far back by religious and Torah purposes and, last, by academic goals. The picture is more complex among men who seem to relate to particular goals rather than to goal "families." For example, among the goals men chose as most important were a universal item ("develop the abilities and interests of each pupil"), a religious and Torah item ("prepare pupils who fulfill commandments conscientiously"), and an academic item ("direct pupils to high-level academic studies"). Men more than women attributed importance to religious and Torah goals but they did not view the other areas as of negligible importance. Women clearly did not perceive academic and intellectual growth as an important purpose of education.

    Qualitative interview methods confirmed and sharpened these findings. Almost all respondents affirmed universal purposes of education and many mentioned religious and Torah goals also. Very few noted academic or intellectual goals as important even after prodding. A fairly common response packaged universal and religious goals together implying that the universal purposes of education stem from

TABLE 2. Male and Female Respondents' Choices of Two Most Important Goals (%)

	Female n=348	Male n=142
Prepare tolerant students who respect the opinions and lifestyle of others	25.6	1.5
Develop the abilities and interests of each student	20.8	13.9
Prepare students who blend living by the Torah with a career	12.5	13.5
Develop an independent learner with internal motivation to learn	9.2	9.5
Prepare students who fulfill the commandments conscientiously	8.7	14.2
Prepare students who will be good productive citizens	8.2	11.7
Guide students to higher Torah education	3.8	8.4
Prepare broad-minded students who value general education (literature, music, art)	3.4	2.6
Guide students to high-level academic studies	2.9	12.1
Prepare students for high Torah academic achievement	2.4	1.9
Prepare students for high academic achievement in general subjects	1.5	11.0

religious sources. For example, several students referred to good citizenship as civic *and* religious responsibilities. Several others suggested helping people and *"derech eretz"* as important purposes of education. The latter term refers to a stance of personal humility alongside respect toward tradition, elders, and wisdom. Clearly these purposes include a universal element combined with an ethical-religious component. Indeed, it is possible to argue that these purposes are religious at their core but overlap with universal goals. Thus, if the religious or universal meanings of these purposes change over time, the degree of overlap may diminish and disharmonious relations between religious and universal purposes may develop.

Turning to the desired characteristics of public religious graduates, results in Table 3 indicate that men and women similarly ranked their importance. Religious and Torah components are prominent among all participants, especially men. Once again, intellectual characteristics are less important. Differences between men and women were found for three items; two of these involve religious and Torah

TABLE 3. Desired Image of Public Religious Graduates as Evaluated by Male and Female Teacher Education Students

	Mean† (standard deviation) female n=348	Mean (standard deviation) male n=142	t
The graduate conscientiously keeps commandments	2.32 (1.53)	2.00 (1.35)	2.17*
The graduate has broad Torah knowledge	3.19 (1.53)	2.54 (1.38)	4.32**
The graduate is involved in the community and contributes to society	3.34 (1.61)	3.51 (1.48)	1.10
The graduate realizes his personal potential	3.35 (1.63)	3.62 (1.52)	1.64
The graduate has broad general knowledge	4.26 (1.62)	4.41 (1.49)	1.23
The graduate enters a productive area of life—science, communications, culture, etc.	4.29 (1.58)	4.70 (1.38)	2.65**

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$
† Lower means indicate greater importance

elements. Men ranked them as more important than did women. The third referred to the participation of graduates in all aspects of society. Women accorded this item more importance than did men, but all respondent groups viewed this as the least important characteristic.

The interview data revealed that all participants see the religious-Torah element as a desired attribute of the public religious school graduate. On a few occasions this was the only emphasis. Usually, it was combined with good citizenship and other universal characteristics. A few interviewees also spoke of personal and career success but this was always related to contributions to society ("high-ranking army officer," "outstanding scientist"). The interview schedule also included an item regarding undesirable characteristics of the public religious graduate. Answers to this question confirmed what has been reported so far. Some respondents spoke only of abandoning religious practice; others mentioned "people without meaningful values" and still others combined the two. Again, academic and intellectual purposes of education were peripheral in the minds of participants. There was very little mention of this area and even when prodded respondents attributed very little importance to this purpose.

Until now results comparing first- and final-year students have not been presented because very few significant differences were found. However, Table 4 presents data indicating one important distinction between the two cohorts of students. For two of the three significant differences that appeared, older students ranked academic attributes as less important than did the younger students. The third item indicating a significant difference, "the graduate will realize his personal potential," is nebulous and could be interpreted as an academic or a personal issue. These results suggest that over time students in the teacher education programs attribute decreased importance to intellectual purposes of education.

Last we consider the second indirect measure of purposes of education among religious teacher education students. This involved a ranking of six desirable characteristics of teachers in public religious schools. These characteristics and relevant results for men and women appear in Table 5. Women attributed more importance to two items reflecting open and respectful relations between teachers and pupils while men attributed more importance to a professional characteristic of teachers and a religious trait. Also, note that two items related to the professional functioning of teachers, "the teacher should have

TABLE 4. Desired Image of Public Religious Graduates as Evaluated by First- and Final-Year Teacher Education Students

	Mean[†] (standard deviation) first-year n=306	Mean (standard deviation) final-year n=206	t
The graduate conscientiously keeps commandments	2.28 (1.47)	2.23 (1.54)	0.38
The graduate has broad Torah knowledge	2.82 (1.51)	3.29 (1.54)	3.41***
The graduate is involved in the community and contributes to society	3.40 (1.60)	3.33 (1.52)	0.48
The graduate realizes his personal potential	3.57 (1.65)	3.25 (1.53)	2.24*
The graduate has broad general knowledge	4.09 (1.61)	4.48 (1.53)	2.70**
The graduate enters a productive area of life—science, communications, culture, etc.	4.39 (1.56)	4.39 (1.53)	0.00

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$
[†] Lower means indicate greater importance

strong pedagogical skills" and "the teacher should be on a high academic and professional level," are ranked in the bottom half of importance. This image of the teacher is congruent with the relatively insignificant role academic purposes of education played in the thinking of the teacher education students.

Indeed, this point was made powerfully in the qualitative part of the study. Most participants in the interviews characterized excellent teachers as personal models for pupils, as persons with outstanding personality traits. There was almost no reference to the teacher's pedagogical knowledge or skills, to subject matter mastery, or to anything directly related to instruction. Charisma rather than professional competence seems to be the key to good teaching in the minds of these soon-to-be classroom teachers.

Findings from the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in this study are complementary allowing us to offer five conclusions:

1. All teacher education students expressed agreement with universal purposes of education and religious-Torah purposes.

2. As compared to women, men attributed importance to religious-Torah purposes and to academic goals.
3. Academic-intellectual growth is not perceived as an important purpose of education by any respondent group and it diminishes in importance over time.
4. Teacher education students deem subject-matter knowledge and professional skills as relatively unimportant; charisma is seen as the key to teaching success.
5. A positive public religious school graduate is described as an individual who blends religious tradition with good citizenship; academic scholarship is not important.

These conclusions have important implications for educational policy and practice regarding public religious education in general and specifically for teacher education for public religious schools. Following we briefly note three issues. First, there is the real possibility of growing conflict about the purposes of education between men educated in *yeshivot hesder* and their teacher institutes versus women

TABLE 5. Desired Characteristics of Public Religious Teachers According to Male and Female Teacher Education Students

	Mean† (standard deviation) female n=348	Mean (standard deviation) male n=142	t
Show interest in the uniqueness of each pupil	2.90 (1.50)	3.38 (1.56)	3.15***
Relate respectfully to each pupil, even one whose behavior is inconsistent with school norms	2.93 (1.76)	3.40 (1.69)	2.74**
Be a "Torah person"	3.15 (1.83)	2.30 (1.65)	4.78***
Have excellent pedagogical skills	3.79 (1.52)	3.44 (1.54)	2.33*
Be an open person enabling students to disagree	4.00 (1.51)	4.11 (1.44)	0.74
Have excellent academic and subject-matter knowledge	4.00 (1.78)	4.29 (1.72)	1.14

*p < 0.05; ** p <0.01; *** p <0.001
† Lower means indicate greater importance

entering the teaching ranks from teachers colleges. Men are more concerned about religious matters and Torah study while women emphasize universal purposes of education. While some *modus vivendi* seems to have been reached by creating the perception of overlap between the two purposes, frequently this stretches reality severely. Indeed, many young people are troubled by what seems to them a facile solution to a real problem. Certainly, if teachers don't have a reasonably coherent vision of educational purposes, they will not be able to guide their students with sensitivity and intellectual honesty. What may be needed is a more complex vision of the relationship between universal and religious educational purposes, enabling young adults, including aspiring teachers, to adopt their own personal blend of educational goals and values.

Another ramification of the results is the appearance of early signs of a rupture in the traditional perception of knowledge and learning as the ultimate value of Jewish life. Although modern Jewish educational philosophers such as Levinas (see Aronowicz 1999) have reaffirmed the centrality of study and of the pursuit of truth by means of the intellect, we consistently found that teacher education students deemed academic and intellectual purposes of education relatively unimportant. Furthermore, teachers' professional and intellectual status were also of secondary importance. This is especially ironic because it is taking place in Israel which, according to Levinas and other thinkers, should serve to stimulate a resurgence of Jewish scholarship and intellectual growth (Aronowicz 1999).

An optimistic explanation of the findings regarding the diminished importance of intellectual purposes of education relates to policies and practices in the Israeli educational system. Much emphasis is placed on school grades, especially for secondary school students, and on high matriculation exam scores. The mass media often describe high schools as "grade factories" and a number of reforms recently initiated by the Education Ministry to improve the situation have not yet solved the problem. It could be that the data here reveal elements of a backlash among young educators who not long ago completed their required schooling. It is likely that the perceptions of their own schooling experiences color their present preferences for their students. Perhaps what they are saying is that the academic and intellectual spheres are not the only purposes of education. There are universal and religious and probably other purposes that are also important. Perhaps they are not claiming that intellectual purposes of education

are not important; rather, they are asserting that schooling in the beginning of the twenty-first century entails much more than academic scholarship. If this were the case, we expect that over time academic and intellectual purposes of education will reappear as strong forces in the thinking of religious teacher education students in Israel, hopefully with meaningful linkages to other central values and purposes.

Finally, the findings point to a significant regression in religious teacher education students' understandings of the teacher role. As noted earlier, perceptions of the good teacher have developed from a focus on teacher personality, to teacher behavior, to the recent emphasis on teacher thoughts and beliefs. Yet, participants here see good teachers as persons endowed with certain personality traits. Thus, teaching excellence is characterized as something inborn, not learned or developed. These teacher education students have opted for an aprofessional stance that makes unnecessary any sustained intensive effort to learn and/or to improve one's teaching abilities. In its simplest formulation they are saying, "either you have it or you don't."

It is noteworthy that this way of thinking about teaching is perfectly congruent with the nonintellectual purposes of education favored by the respondents. Speculation raised above regarding a backlash against the strong emphasis on intellectual pursuits in high schools also may be relevant regarding perceptions of the teacher role. However, in this case such a stance is especially troubling because religious teacher education students may embrace it simply because it makes their lives easier by eliminating the need for critical thinking and for professional investment in in-service and continuing education. Undoubtedly, some modifications in their teacher education program are necessary to effectively deal with the issues raised here.

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