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**Improving Teachers' and Parents'
Perceptions towards Educational
Partnerships and Teachers' Status in the
Community
(Case Study)**

Long Abstract

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the effect of an educational intervention program on parents' perceptions towards teachers and their professional status and teachers' perceptions towards cooperation with parents at primary school. The intervention program was based on joint parent-teacher educational committees (JEC).

The research employed a mixed method research and case study, in the qualitative section conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 parents and 17 teachers. In the quantitative part, closed-ended questionnaires were distributed to two groups: a control group with 25 teachers and 25 parents who did not participate in the intervention program, and an intervention group with 17 teachers and 17 parents who participated in the intervention program. Both groups completed the questionnaire twice at different times. Data from these tools were collected about parents' and teachers' perceptions towards educational parent-school cooperation and the link to teachers' status.

The qualitative findings showed parents believe that strengthening parent-teacher relationship may lead to an improvement in teachers' status whereas teachers expressed ambivalence about the correlation between parent-school cooperation and teachers' status, which is expressed by acknowledgement of the advantages of parental involvement in school and at the same time fear of harm to their professional status due to over-involvement. Quantitative findings showed that parents and teachers who participated in the intervention program demonstrated more positive perceptions in all examined dimensions than teachers and parents who did not participate in the program.

The conclusions are that in parallel to educational reforms that seek to improve teachers' status, internal school processes also positively affect parents' perceptions to teachers' status. Educational partnerships at elementary school with the purpose of improving teachers' status is linked to assimilating a culture of dialogue between teachers and parents in dialogue circles, acquiring tools for educational dialogue between teachers and parents at teacher training institutions, willingness of school staff and the parent community to enter into discourse and of course school staff's awareness of the importance of educational partnerships with parents.

From an applied point of view, the findings of the current research are most important to the education system and its partners. Hence, schools that see strengthening links with the school community as an objective, will promote opportunities for cooperation of teachers with parents throughout the academic year, and will integrate in the routine of school life work on joint educational committees made up of teachers and parents that will be based on respectful dialogue. The Ministry of Education will examine the results of educational reform whilst striving continuously to empower teachers and making the teaching profession attractive both financially and intellectually.

Key Words: teacher status, intervention program, educational partnership, joint educational committees (JEC), 'New Horizon' educational reform, school climate, dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

Research Background

The status of the teaching profession and the relationship between parents and school constitute the starting point of this research. These important issues are the concern of educators, but not only them. Sometimes, the impression is that these matters have become a conversation topic in every home in Israel.

While the teaching profession has declined in recent decades, parents' involvement in educational activities in schools has increased significantly. Parents' involvement will only increase, as shown in the results of a survey published by The *National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education (RAMA)* at the end of the school year, and at the same time, factors in the Israeli education system are warning that parent-teacher relationships in Israel are at the brink of explosion (Yanko, 2018).

This research examined each of the issues – teachers' status and the relationship between school and parents separately and together in an attempt to find the way improvement teachers' status.

The issue of the status of teachers and the teaching profession in Israel has been a key issue in education systems in the Western world as well as in Israel (Symoniidis, 2015). Teachers' status in Israel, was high until the 1970's. Since the 1970's there has been a decrease in the teachers' status due to many reasons.

Additionally, owing to society's belittling approach to the teaching profession, a shortage of teachers is likely to develop in the near future (Ben-Peretz, 2009; Kimron, 2018). At the same time, it has been found that it is important to raise teachers' status in the eyes of pupils, parents and the general public as a direct and significant factor in promoting achievements in the education system (McKinsey & Company, 2007).

Different theories such as Davis and Moore's (1945) functional theory Hughes' (1985) social bargaining theory, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory have examined the concept of professional status through various parameters such as influence on society, the audience of those who are influenced, politicization of organizations, wages and status symbols, and suggest ways to improve the status of the teaching profession, for instance, by improving teachers' wages, introducing advanced technologies to the education system,

increasing the teachers target audience (working with parents and the community), incentives for outstanding teachers, publicizing successes in the media, involving teachers in decision-making and developing leadership and career routs.

Numerous state committees in Israel have gathered over the years in order to examine the causes of burnout in the teacher's status and suggest ways to improve the situation (for example: The Guri Committee 1960, Yaffe Committee, 1971; Etzioni Commission, 1978, Dovrat Committee 2005). The 'New Horizon' reform is systemic reform in elementary and junior high schools which was introduced in 2006 in Israel (RAMA, 2016). The reform encompasses many aspects of school life. Two main objective goals of the reform which are important to this research were:

1. Modify and enhance the role of teachers &strengthen teachers' status.
2. Improving school climate

The signs of change started to show in Israel, from a critical attitude to the teachers' status on the part of the general public, towards cautious hope (Dahaf Institute, 2012).

The literature engaging in school-community relationships has found that there has been an increase in parents' involvement in schools, in the creation of schools and partnership in determining educational ideology. Research found that the achievements of pupils whose parents are involved in school are higher than those of children whose parents are not involved in school activities (Friedman, 2007).

Still, staff perceives parental involvement as intervention that harms the educational autonomy and professional status of teachers (Idelstein, 1989 as cited in Friedman, 2011) and yet, principals and teachers realize that parents are an important resource that they have to learn how to use for the benefit of school and pupils (Winkler, 1997).

Most primary schools in Israel are neighborhood schools, located within the community and presume to be part of it although they are not defined as community schools. Children and their parents constitute an integral part of this community. The parents' knowledge of the school's and the teachers' work is largely obtained and processed from their children's school experiences and, naturally, from the media coverage that is not really flattering (to say the least). Therefore, it is important to create a change in parents' perceptions towards teachers, as parents shape the public discourse about schools and

teachers in the community. Public discourse plays a significant role in everything related to the public attitude towards the teaching profession and its status in Israel, and it is important to try to change teachers' perceptions towards parents in their schools' communities, since cooperation between teachers and parents is important for promoting organizational educational processes for the advancement of academic achievements and creating an optimal educational climate.

Research Aims

1. To examine causal relationships between educational partnerships and parents' perceptions towards primary school teachers' status within the *'New Horizon'* reform.
2. To examine causal relationships between educational partnerships and teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents' within *'New horizon'* reform.
3. To develop a program of creating partnerships between parents and teachers to improve primary school teachers' status in the Community.
4. To examine the effectiveness of the program of creating partnerships between parents and teachers to improve primary school teachers' status within the Community.

Research Questions

1. What are the causal relationships between educational partnerships and parents' perceptions towards teachers' status in primary school within the 'New Horizon' reform?
2. What are the causal relationships between educational partnerships and teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents within the 'New Horizon' reform?
3. What components may comprise a program of creating partnerships between parents and teachers in primary school that aim to improve teachers' status?
4. What is the effectiveness of the program proposed by our research in relation to parents' perceptions towards teachers' status in primary school and teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents?

Gap in Knowledge

Many studies have investigated the status of the teaching profession in Israel and much has been written on the subject (Altrichter et al., 2013; Taub, 2015; Israel, Wang, & Marino, 2016).

The current research sought to find ways to improve teachers' status and offers a new viewpoint towards teachers' status from the point of view of educational partnerships between parents and teachers. The research examined whether educational partnerships between parents and teachers can influence parents' perceptions regarding the status of the teaching profession and teachers' perceptions towards parents in primary school.

The intervention program that was developed especially for this research is based on the construction of joint educational committees for parents and teachers (JEC). The JECs allow for dialogue (dialogue circles) between parents and teachers in order to promote educational goals at school while strengthening parent-teacher relationships. These JECs are, in fact educational partnerships.

Since the issue of teachers' status occupies additional western countries, we believe that the findings of this research and the program proposed may also interest education researchers in these countries.

Research Field

The research was conducted between 2015 and 2016 at a primary school ranging from First grade to Sixth grades in the center of Israel. The research population consisted of 57 parents, 59 teachers and 5 principals. In the first research stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 teachers and 15 parents to examine parents' perceptions towards teachers and the teaching profession, as well as to examine parents and teachers' perceptions of educational collaboration between teachers and parents.

Based on the interviews, closed questionnaires were employed and administered to two groups: the one was an experimental group (17 teachers and 17 parents), whose members participated in an intervention program in a model of joint educational committees for teachers and parents (JEC) for five months. The other was a control group

(25 teachers and 25 parents), whose members did not take part in an intervention program, i.e. they did not participate in joint educational committees.

The questionnaires examined the relationship between educational collaborations and parents' perceptions towards the status of teachers and the teaching profession, as well as teachers' perceptions towards collaboration with parents.

The questionnaires were administered to both groups at two points in time - prior implementation and after the conclusion of the intervention program.

On a personal note, as a teacher in the last twenty years, and a principal for three years, it is my belief that the teaching profession and teachers' status should be at the top of the professional and national priority list. The teaching profession's is highly important as it deals with the education of generations of citizens who later on, will live in and lead the country on the basis of values and tools they acquired from the education system. Improving teachers' status will result in attracting better teachers to the profession and consequently, better achievements among pupils in the Israeli education system. As such, this research, which sought to discuss and examine strategies to strengthen the profession and improve teachers' status in Israel, is of national importance on a macro level and no lesser importance for me personally on a micro level.

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

The professional literature reviewed for this study point to changes and vicissitudes in the relationships between schools and parents in recent decades in Israel. The balance of power has changed, and one must address parents as important players in the educational system.

Despite differences of opinion about the nature of parental involvement in schools and the way it can be expressed, it was apparent that there was agreement among researchers about the importance of cooperation between home and school and not only to improve pupils' achievements but also for the benefit of teacher empowerment and improving the educational climate at schools.

With regard to the importance of educational partnerships between teachers, parents and children (in micro), there is no argument, but this research puts an emphasis on a different type of partnership – an educational partnership in everything connected to global educational processes at school that are likely to affect the whole system (macro). This partnership is based on values such as respect, trust and facilitation but it is different, requiring recognition of the importance of parents as part of the system and their right to take part in educational processes and not just about their individual child and therefore it is more complex, sets other challenges and is built gradually. This is about an active partnership based on face-to-face meetings between teachers and parents around round tables and creating dialogue. Educational partnership that demands optimism despite the many difficulties there are in achieving it, however it is likely to bring about many changes and develop schools (Mitchell, 2009).

The research was based on a number of key theories:

A. Theories and models pertaining to the concept of teachers' status

- ✓ Davis and Moore's (1945) **functional theory**, which examines the teaching profession's status by its contribution to society based on such measures as academization, use of technology, work conditions and remuneration.
- ✓ Hughes' (1958) **social bargaining theory** which examines the teaching profession by its target audience and influence. Appreciation of the profession is measured by achievements and remuneration.

- ✓ Bronfenbrenner's (1979) **ecological theory** examines the status of the teaching profession according to the political behavior of professional organizations, the degree of teachers' involvement in decision-making and connection to the community.
- ✓ Hall and Langton's (2006) **model** examines the status of the teaching profession by three measures: power, money and fame.

All these theories have in common the realization that the teaching profession is low in specific parameters compared to professions evaluated on the professions' scale and these theories' practical suggestions and recommendations regarding improving the teaching profession's image in public.

B. Theories pertaining to the nature of the relationship between school, parents and community:

- ✓ Feldman and Fisher's (2002) **Identification and alertness theory (Friedman & Fisher, 2002)** - examines the level of parental involvement in schools according to the following dimensions: identification and alertness, where the optimal approach is that of moderate involvement. Parents identify with school processes and are involved to a certain extent, without harming educational processes, and at the same time, school enables parents to be involved.
- ✓ Gur & Levy-Zalmanson's (2005) **parental involvement as dynamics of conflict and frustration** - examines parental involvement according to dimensions of knowledge, disagreement, frustration and helplessness: certain situation of disagreement between teachers and parents and/or states where parents feel they lack knowledge may cause frustration on the part of parents and hence to power struggles. To avoid such situations, a way has to be found for schools and the parents' community to cooperate.
- ✓ Hoover and Dempsey's (1997) **influence model** – examines parental involvement in schools according to the following dimensions: reasons for involvement, ways of involvement, mechanism and the involvement's influence on pupils' achievements. The theory ignores school policy, principals' leadership and the school community from parents' perspective.

The three theories presented above examine the reasons for and level of parental involvement in school from the parents' perspective.

- ✓ Friedman's (2007) **social and conscious distance theory** examines the degree of parents' involvement from the perspective of school on a continuum that has two opposing ends the first being an open door to the parents and the second - a closed door, with the optimal approach being the balance approach: school opens its doors to parents but maintains a social and conscious distance so as not to violate professional standards in teachers' work.

Despite their differences, these theories share by a view that parents' involvement stems mainly from parents' desire to take a significant part in their children's educational processes at school and to understand that teachers' opposition to parental involvement stems mainly from a tendency to defend their professional status.

C. Models for optimal parent-teachers' partnership: (1) Ethical Alliance Model, based on values such as trust and support and acknowledges school staff and acknowledges staff and parents as two separate entities that have to undergo a meaningful process of clarifying needs and perceptions prior to entering a partnership. **(2) Two-Dimensional Model**, emphasizing an invitation to take part in the process for both parents and teachers, and thus referring to parallel processes that parents and educational staff undergo; **(3) Ethical Code Model** emphasizes the importance of a common and respectful language between the educational staff and the parents' community as a key to constructing the partnership

The common denominator to all these models is the recognition that the educational partnership is based on the need to promote the school, the understanding that cooperation between the educational staff and the school community is important and can contribute to school climate and the well-being of all educational role partners. In addition, the models emphasize that systemic educational partnerships are built in stages that cannot be overlooked, and at the same time, the needs and beliefs of each side in the partnership must be recognized. Trust, respect, and communication are the milestones of the educational partnership.

D. Theories of educational reform

Common to studies that have examined the success of current educational reforms is the assertion that the best education systems in the world invest both in teachers and pupils in order to promote pupils 'academic achievements, encourage educational cooperation with the community, and emphasize teachers' empowerment as a condition for improving the teaching profession's status (McKinsey & Company, 2007).

In Israel, as well as in other countries, the teaching profession suffers from a low status. Many committees have gathered over the years to discuss and raise ideas for improving the *status of teachers in Israel*. For the past 12 years, two comprehensive *educational reforms* have been implemented in the attempt to raise the status of teachers. 'Courage to Change' in high schools and 'New Horizon' in primary and junior high schools.

- ✓ New Horizon is an educational reform implemented in kindergartens, primary schools and junior high school in Israel since 2006 s. This is a comprehensive reform aimed primarily at improving the status of teachers. A change in teachers' wages, in their work week's outline, fewer frontal hours and more individual hours teachers spend with pupils, improved working conditions for teachers, and constructing promotion and career paths.

This study, which examines the impact of educational partnerships on parents' perceptions towards the status of the teaching profession, is based on some of the recommendations of the above-mentioned theories: broadening the teachers' target audience, involving teachers in decision making, and connecting to and influencing the school community. Furthermore, the understanding that parents want to take part in the school's educational process while teachers are interested in maintaining their professional authority and all within the broad context of the New Horizon reform that has introduced a change in teachers' role perception.

As reviewed in the professional literature, in recent years there has been an increase in the involvement of parents in schools, and this involvement has been perceived by the teachers as undermining their professional status. The question arises as to how one can change parents' negative perceptions toward teachers and the teaching profession, and at

the same time, teachers' negative perceptions towards parents in schools and their involvement in educational processes.

I.1. Intervention Program

The Educational Intervention Program was developed for improving Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions towards Educational Partnerships and Teachers' Status in the Community .It was Based on the standards document published by the Ministry of Education in Israel, 2005, analogous to Maslow's hierarchy of needs including the values: respect, esteem, love and belonging and on the construction of joint educational committees for parents and teachers (JEC), allow for dialogue circles between partners in order to promote educational goals at school while strengthening parent-teacher relationships. 34 members (17 teachers and 17 parents) from parent management (made up of representatives of the 18 classes, from First grade to Sixth grade), participated in 3 committees. The choice of these three committees for the intervention program was proposed by the school principal on the basis of the committee's aims connected to school climate and additional educational goals such as constructing a social events program and the wish to be involved in the community.

The committees met five times during the year and operated by a pre-arranged syllabus, for instance: Climate committee:

- ✓ Coordinating expectations for joint leadership and work
- ✓ Getting to know one another and coordinating expectations of parent and teacher committee members,
- ✓ Identifying needs and how the committee would operate for this year
- ✓ Feedback on committee activity and possible action directions.
- ✓ Role of school principal in leading cooperation between teachers and parents
- ✓ Summarize and evaluate committee activities. Important components in reciprocal relations between teacher and parents, 06.2017.

Each committee was led by an active parent with a professional background in leading groups and the researcher. Members of the committees were asked to answer a closed questionnaire before starting the joint work and at the end of the committee's work. Two questionnaires were developed for the program, one for parents and one for teachers. Each questionnaire included several sections on parents' perceptions towards teachers and on the status of the teaching

profession, and teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents. **Evaluation of the Program:** A statistical analysis of questionnaires before and after participation in the program and comparison with the control group, whose members (teachers and parents) had not participated in the intervention program.

I.2. Conceptual Framework

This research sought to examine if the participation of parents and teachers in educational partnership in a primary school will influence the parents' perceptions towards teachers' status, and teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents' in the context of the '*New Horizon*' reform which implemented in Israel in 2006. Its uniqueness is in that the research offers a new viewpoint towards teachers' status from the point of view of educational partnerships between parents and teachers.

The research aims were to examine causal relationships between educational partnerships and parents' perceptions towards primary school teachers' status, and teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents' within '*New Horizon*' reform. The focus of this research is to develop a program of creating partnerships between parents and teachers to improve primary school teachers' status in the Community and to examine the effectiveness of the program.

The study addressed the questions: What are the causal relationships between educational partnerships and parents' perceptions towards teachers' status and teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents within the '*New Horizon*' reform? What are the components that may comprise a program of creating partnerships between parents and teachers in primary school that aim to improve teachers' status? and what is the effectiveness of the program?

The ***intervention program*** developed for the current research examines whether joint educational teachers and parents' committees (educational partnerships) that deal with meaningful educational processes can lead to an improvement in ***parents' perceptions towards teachers and teachers' status*** and an improvement in ***teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents***.

The main concepts underpinning this research are depicted in the following model:

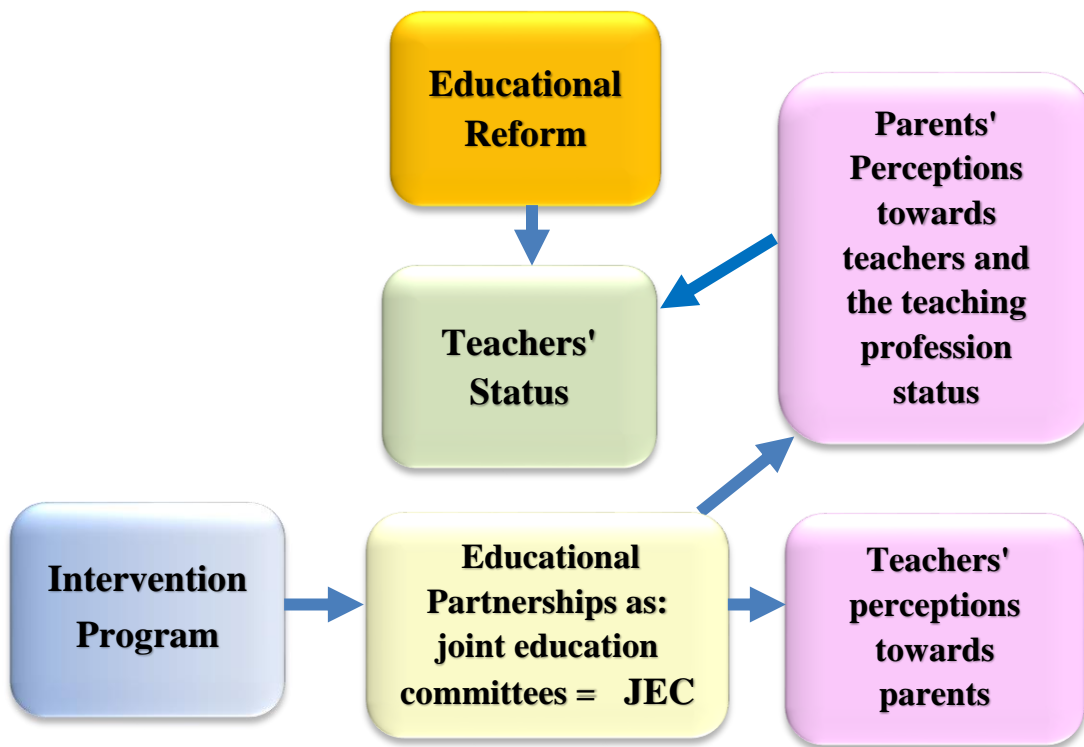


Figure 1.I: Conceptual framework

As previous studies in the literature review showed, community involvement in the reform, as well as teachers' involvement in community activities, contribute greatly to the success of an educational reform. We believe that parallel to external reforms that address wages as a significant component of the status teachers, a change must also come from within the schools. Therefore, examining the intervention program developed especially for this research and building a model for parent-teacher collaboration within the school and the community is of great significance, especially in light of the fact that as the involvement of parents and community in school life increases, so do the difficulties it creates for the teachers' community.

CHAPTER II: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

II.1. Research Aims and Objectives

Public discourse plays a significant role in everything related to the public perceptions towards the teaching profession and its status in the professions' hierarchy. Therefore, this research sought to examine if the participation of parents and teachers in educational partnership in a primary school will improve the parents' perceptions towards teachers' status, in the context of the *'New Horizon'* reform.

1. To examine causal relationships between educational partnerships and parents' perceptions towards primary school teachers' status within the *'New Horizon'* reform.
2. To examine causal relationships between educational partnerships and teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents' within *'New horizon'* reform.
3. To develop a program of creating partnerships between parents and teachers to improve primary school teachers' status in the Community.
4. To examine the effectiveness of the program of creating partnerships between parents and teachers to improve primary school teachers' status within the Community.

II.2. General and Specific Research Questions

How does participation of parents and teachers in educational partnership in a primary school improve the parents' perceptions towards teachers' status?

1. What are the causal relationships between educational partnerships and parents' perceptions towards teachers' status in primary school within the *'New Horizon'* reform?
2. What are the causal relationships between educational partnerships and teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents within the *'New Horizon'* reform?
3. What components may comprise a program of creating partnerships between parents and teachers in primary school that aim to improve teachers' status?

4. What is the effectiveness of the program proposed by our research in relation to parents' perceptions towards teachers' status in primary school and teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents?

II.3. Research Hypotheses

II.3.1. General Research Hypothesis

It will be found that participation of parents and teachers in educational partnership in a primary school in the center of Israel will improve the parents' perceptions towards teachers' status and teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents in the community .

II.3.2. Secondary Hypotheses

1. It will be found that participating in educational partnership as an intervention program will influence parents' perceptions towards primary school teachers' status in relation to **trust, mutual respect and appreciation.**
2. It will be found that participating in educational partnership as an intervention program will influence teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents' in relation to **trust, mutual respect, openness to dialogue and collaboration** with parents.

The main variables in this research are:

Independent variable: Applying Educational partnership as an intervention program in a primary school in the center of Israel.

Dependent variables:

1. Parents' perceptions towards primary school teachers' status in relation to trust, mutual respect and appreciation;
2. Teachers' perceptions towards primary school parents in relation to trust, mutual respect, openness to dialogue and collaboration

II.4. Research Paradigm – Mixed Methods Research

The choice of mixed methods research is in line with research objectives and questions. The main goal of the study was to examine the causal relationships between educational partnerships between parents and teachers (the independent variable) and parents' perceptions regarding the status of teachers (the dependent variable). The integrated paradigm enables complementarity-investigation of various aspects and dimensions of the phenomenon. Another goal of the study was to try to develop a model of optimal educational partnership. Here, too, a combination of the paradigms enabled the deepening and development of the research findings. The use of qualitative research enables a thorough understanding of the parents' emotions, thoughts and dilemmas, and of course the school staff regarding educational partnerships in the school between teachers and parents (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2004). Another purpose was to locate and describe the frameworks in which there is educational partnership between teachers and parents or frameworks that should be educational partnership. Using quantitative research enabled to examine the relationship and its orientation (according to the research questions, correlation and causal link) between educational partnerships and parents' perceptions towards the status of teachers and the teaching profession. Educational programs within the framework of the new Horizon Reform, which can raise the status of teachers and the teaching profession among the school community.

In this study, we used quantitative and qualitative methods equally since we believe that the phenomenon we investigate could be best describe through both tools.

II.4.1. Case Study

The fact that case study is one of the research approaches to explore organizational culture and the wish to examine pieces of reality that are as close as possible to an organizational reality, led the researcher in this study to choose the case study approach.

Case studies are rather common in educational research as they allow researchers to see through what meets the eye, expose contradicting logics in human life, analyze and interpret the nature and features of social systems (Yosifun, in Tzabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2016). In this study, which sought to examine whether the participation of parents and

teachers in a joint educational process can improve parental perceptions of teachers' status and teacher perceptions of primary school parents, a case study can address both. (1) A close examination of the dynamics between teachers and parents around educational processes in the school, to identify the main issues that openly and covertly engage the partners in the interpersonal relationships created during the process; (2) Providing information and insights that will serve school management in outlining an organizational educational method that will advance and improve communication between teachers and the entire school community, and hopefully, the educational climate in the school

The intervention program employed in a model of parent-teacher dialogue circles is a kind of pilot for a work model that will be assimilated into the organizational culture of the educational institution. Thus, the intervention program allowed the researcher to identify, describe and explain the narrative of the teachers and that of the pupils' parents in their relationship. Case study in this research is a means of evaluating the intervention program implemented by the researcher in a single educational institution, which leads to insights that yield possibilities for improvement in parent-teacher relationship within the school and later further improving the status of teachers in the eyes of the public.

II.5. Research Stages and Tools

The table below depicts the research stages and tools.

Table 1.II: Summary of research stages and tools

Stage	Approach	Aim	Research Method	Research tool	Research population
Pre-intervention	Qualitative	To examine parents + teachers' perceptions towards partnership in school	Interview	Semi-structured interviews	-17 teachers -15 parents -1 parliament member. -2 school principals -A representative of the committee planning the new horizon reform. -Director of the Primary Education Department at the Southern Sharon Council
	Pilot	To validate the closed-ended questionnaire	Investigation	Closed-ended questionnaire (Adapted from Fisher & Friedman, 2003).	20 teachers 25 parents
	Quantitative	To examine parents' and teachers' perceptions of educational partnership, and the relationship towards their perceptions of teachers' status and status of the teaching profession – without any participation in the intervention program To examine H 1 and 2`	Investigation	Closed-ended validated questionnaire Validation by an expert statistician (Adapted from Fisher & Friedman, 2003).	<u>Control group – beginning of the year</u> 25 parents 25 teachers <u>Control group -four months later</u> 25 parents from the above 25 teachers from the above
	Quantitative	To examine the relationship between educational partnership and parents' perceptions towards teachers' status and teaching profession status+ teachers' perceptions towards parents- before participation in intervention program To examine H 1 and 2	Investigation	Closed-ended validated questionnaire Validation by an expert statistician (Adapted from Fisher & Friedman, 2003).	Experimental group: 17 teachers 17 parents

Stage	Approach	Aim	Research Method	Research tool	Research population
Intervention	Implementing the Intervention Program				In 3 groups, consisting a series of meetings for teachers and parents with the aim of leading together an educational process in primary school.
Post Intervention	Quantitative	To examine the relationship between educational partnership and parents' perceptions towards teachers' status and teaching profession status+ teachers' perceptions towards parents after participation in intervention program To examine H 1 and 2	Investigation	Closed-ended questionnaire (Adapted from Fisher & Friedman, 2003).	17 teachers 17 parents In 3 groups, consisting a series of meetings for teachers and parents with the aim of leading together an educational process in primary school.
		Building a program of optimal partnerships. Description of the model in the conclusions chapter of the thesis			

CHAPTER III: FINDINGS

III.1. Findings Emerging from Research Question 1

1. Parental involvement in school has a number of advantages as: Sense of partnership and belonging, personal connection with teachers, knowledge, control of school studies and activities, personal example to their own children and the ability to help their own children.
2. Most parents have no interest in pedagogical partnership owing to a lack of knowledge or appropriate tools. Moreover, most parents emphasize that they do not believe it is right to interfere in teachers' educational and pedagogical decisions

and actions. Furthermore, parents believe that high levels of parental involvement can be an obstacle in school

3. Parents believe that the main issues in which they are a source of cooperation with teachers are issues of extra educational activities such as community projects.
4. There is total consensus among parents regarding teachers' low status among the Israeli public. Parents regret this matter and raise various hypotheses regarding the reasons for it.
5. Parents believe that strengthening the foundations of relationships between parents and teachers will lead to strengthening the status of teachers.

III.2 Findings Emerging from Research Question 2

1. Teachers believe that cooperation between teachers & parents is the prime responsibility of schools there for, Parents involvement must be undertaken gradually and in correct dosages to recruit teachers and provide a fitting response to their objections
2. Teachers agree that, anything connected to subjects of learning, books, material and decisions with a teaching nature, parents must remain 'outside the picture'. Parents can only express their opinion or advice where most decisions remain in the hands of the educational staff – management and teachers.
3. All teachers in the current research agreed that teachers' status has had been seriously damaged in recent years for reasons of government policy, wages, parental involvement and even lack of professionalism of teachers in the system
4. Teachers have ambivalent perceptions regarding the possible benefit of including parents in school educational processes and improving teachers' status. Some teachers argued that (a) genuine and honest cooperation between parents and teachers can indeed strengthen the status of teachers (b) parents' involvement is likely to be devastating to teachers' status because it undermines teachers' authority at school, their decisions and autonomy.

III.3. Findings Arising from Research Question No. 3 and Hypotheses No. 1 and No. 2

The following section presents the themes that arose from the quantitative analysis employed on the data collected through the closed-ended questionnaire

Table 2.III: Leading principles of parent-teacher relationships according to teachers

Principle	Mean	Standard Deviation
Trust	4.93	1.00
Tolerance	4.88	0.97
Involvement	4.01	1.37
Understanding	4.77	1.03
Containment	4.72	1.06
Sharing	4.45	1.28
Mutual respect	4.94	1.03
Responsibility	4.77	1.16

Table 3.III: Leading principles of parent-teacher relationships according to parents

Principle	Mean	Standard Deviation
Trust	4.48	0.96
Tolerance	4.57	0.84
Involvement	4.07	1.20
Understanding	4.43	0.94
Containment	4.45	0.96
Sharing	4.17	1.12
Mutual respect	4.77	0.92
Responsibility	4.53	0.91

Teachers and parents believe that mutual respect is the most important value/principle in managing parent-teacher relationships in primary school. Additional high scoring values were trust, responsibility and tolerance. The value of involvement

received the lowest rating among both parents and teachers, followed by the value of sharing. Secondary Hypotheses No. 1 and 2 were confirmed.

III.4. Findings Arising from Research Question No. 4 and Secondary Hypotheses No. 1 and No. 2

The following section presents the themes that arose from the quantitative analysis employed on the data collected through the closed-ended questionnaire

1. The intervention program led to an improvement in the parents' perceptions towards the teachers, so that the parents in the intervention group expressed a more positive perceptions towards the teachers and a more value-based perception towards the teachers after participating in the program.

Secondary Hypothesis No. 1 was confirmed

Table 3.III: Means and standard deviations – parents' value-based perceptions towards teachers in the intervention and the control groups before and after the intervention

		Mean	Standard Deviation
Control	Before	4.235	1.021
	After	3.591	1.102
	Total	3.913	1.062
Intervention	Before	4.615	0.734
	After	4.914	1.275
	Total	4.754	1.077

Table 4.III: Means and standard deviations – parents' positive evaluation of teachers in the intervention and the control groups before and after the intervention

		Mean	Standard Deviation
Control	Before	4.192	1.028
	After	3.782	1.013
	Total	3.987	1.021
Intervention	Before	4.074	0.821
	After	4.762	0.627
	Total	4.547	0.712

2. Teachers (after the intervention) expressed a more positive perceptions towards teachers-parents' interaction at school and an increase in the teachers' value-based perceptions toward the parents. compared with the control group.

Secondary hypothesis No. 2 was confirmed.

Table 5.III: Means and standard deviations – teachers' perceptions towards parent-school interaction in the intervention and the control groups before and after the intervention

		Mean	Standard Deviation
Control	Before	4.452	0.655
	After	4.245	0.521
	Total	4.349	0.588
Intervention	Before	4.030	0.604
	After	4.886	0.681
	Total	4.534	0.641

Table 6.III: Means and standard deviations – teachers' value-based perceptions towards parents in the intervention and the control groups before and after the intervention

		Mean	Standard Deviation
Control	Before	4.876	0.872
	After	4.184	1.312
	Total	4.530	1.092
Intervention	Before	4.117	0.898
	After	4.640	0.842
	Total	4.376	0.855

3. In general, it was found in both intervention and control groups that the more positive parents' perceptions towards their relationship with school, the more they felt involved in school and have more value-based perceptions towards teachers & positive evaluation of teachers and are more involved in class and in school.

Table 7.III: Links between parents' variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Perceptions towards parent-school interaction					
2. Parents' actual involvement in school	.360**				
3. Parents' value-based perceptions 'towards teachers	.355**	.536**			
4. Positive parents' evaluation of teachers	.182*	.522**	.732**		
5. Parents' involvement in class	.392**	.651**	.422**	.311**	
6. Parents' involvement in school	.272**	.642**	.271**	.177*	.642**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

4. In general, it was found in both intervention and control groups that the more positive teachers' perceptions toward parent's-school relationship, the more they feel involved in the relationship with parents, and their perceptions towards parents are more value-based.

Table 8.III: Links between Teachers' Variables in this research

	1	2
1. Perceptions towards parent-school interaction		
2. Teachers' actual involvement in school with parents	.211**	
3. Teachers' Value-based Teachers' perceptions towards parents	.458**	.612**

* p

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings allowed for the development of a new thinking framework regarding parents and school relationships, the focus being educational partnerships seeking to strengthen parent-teacher relationship and reaching an improvement in parents' perceptions towards teachers' status.

Figure 1.IV below presents the conceptual model that emerged from the research.

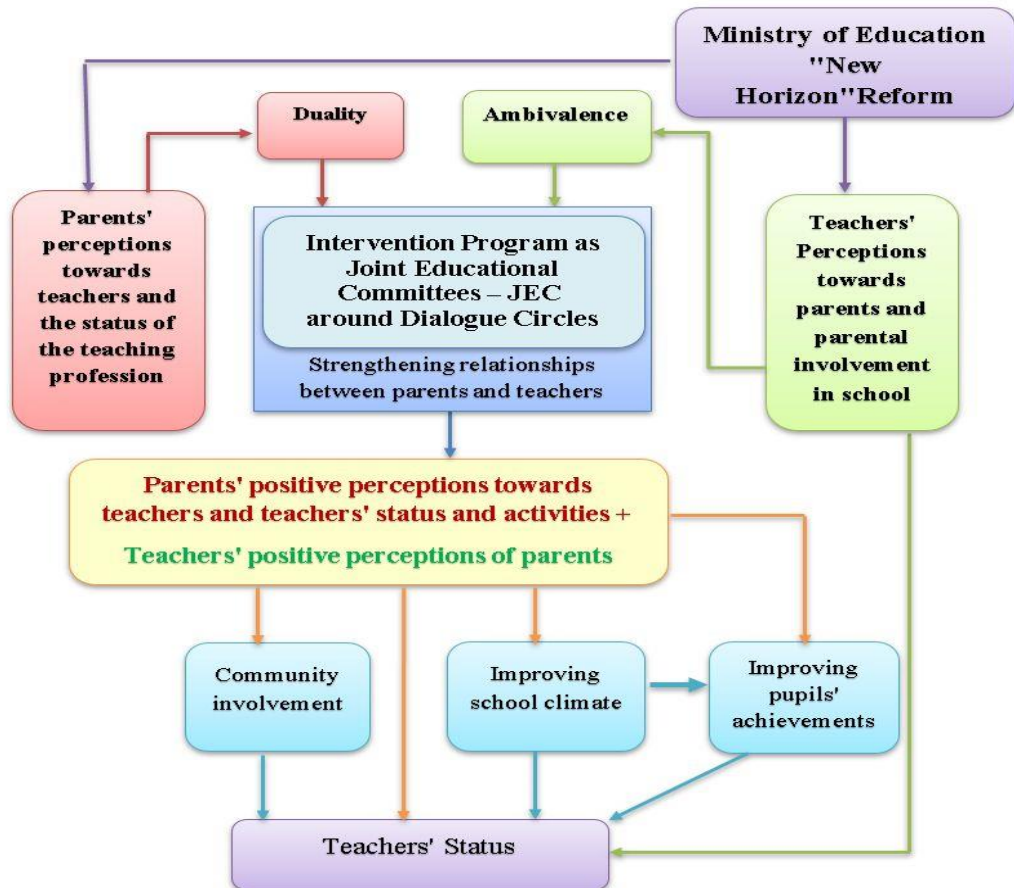


Figure 1.IV: Processes influencing teachers' status

It is a designated model that is characterized by relevance to the literature, the reality and it fits the context of the educational reform that has been implemented in Israel lately, and awareness of the strengths and difficulties involved in applying the model.

The educational intervention program stands at the center of this model, but it is important to remember that the intervention program sought to improve the perceptions of parents towards teachers and the teaching profession.

As can be seen in Figure 1.IV, two processes may affect teachers' status: the one is external and depends on the Ministry of Education and educational reforms. The other is an internal process that takes place within a school and depends on its community: teachers, parents, pupils and educational authority

The Ministry of Education manages the 'New Horizon' Reform and introduces changes that influence the teaching profession, such as wages and development of advancement routes. The teacher education institutions are also under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. They also initiate changes in teacher education programs that also influence changes in the status of the teaching profession and are often accompanied by media advertising. These changes affect teachers' perceptions of their professional status and may also affect parental involvement in school.

At the heart of the model, as well as at the center of this study, are the educational partnerships that are expressed in joint educational committees (JEC) for parents and teachers around dialogue circles, to promote theirs and the school's common goals. These educational partnerships are the climax of a gradual educational process that begins with the perceptions of parents and teachers. Teachers come with their perceptions to the joint work with parents. These perceptions are characterized by the ambivalence pertaining to maintaining boundaries, maintaining professional authority, expectations of school management and supervision, understanding that parents' involvement in school life is inevitable, and may contribute in areas such as enrichment, society and community. Parents arrive at the process with their perceptions, which are characterized by duality in everything related to their involvement in school. They recognize the joint school and parents' responsibility for the safety of the children, maintaining boundaries in the educational discourse, and all that - in the face of concern and frustration.

As shown in the model, the data described above nourishes the parents and teachers' relationship at school and therefore must be processed. Before embarking on joint work, teachers and parents must be prepared for managing and maintaining a normal relationship. Maturity and readiness are required of all partners. Alertness and awareness on the part of teachers regarding parental involvement in schools' educational processes is essential to the process. Moreover, empowering teachers to work with parents is important in order to relieve tensions and develop teachers' ability to work with parents and the community. The relationship between teachers and parents is based primarily on values: mutual respect, trust, accountability and inclusion. Working on these foundations can yield success in the joint parents and teachers' educational committees at school. The intervention program enables parents to become familiar with the teachers and the teaching profession, while at the same time teachers get to know the parents and may minimize their objections. These processes influence strengthening the relationship between teachers and parents. As the model shows, strengthening the relationship with parents affects parents' perceptions of teachers and the status of the teaching profession, as well as three additional dimensions: strengthening ties with the school community, improving educational climate at home and promoting student achievement. The latter two are defined as goals of the "New Horizon" reform.

The two parallel educational processes – the educational reform and internal school processes – lead a change that will hopefully lead to the desired improvement in primary school teachers' status.

IV.1. Practical Implications and Recommendations

IV.1.1. Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

The education system in Israel must invest in teachers, to make the teaching profession attractive both financially and intellectually, in comparison to other professions.

Therefore, it is recommended to follow up on the "New Horizon" program and evaluate it towards the implementation of its next phase, to link the issue of wages to the cost of living index so as to prevent wage-erosion, to invest resources in schools for purchasing advanced technological equipment, computers and smart boards in classrooms,

to improve teachers' work environment (respectful and pleasant work areas for staff meetings, and meetings between teacher and pupils and of course, teachers and parents. It is important to incentivize outstanding teachers.

IV.1.2. Recommendations for Schools

It is recommended that schools regard strengthening the relationship between staff, parents and the educational community to be an operative goal, based on a work plan which will be developed especially for this purpose. schools must create opportunities for dialogue as intervention programs that will allow regular encounters between teachers and parents around dialogue circles. The program must be organized and include clear rules such as: respectful dialogue and non-judgmental communications

It is recommended that dialogues will start with parents of preschool children who are about to make the transition to first grade, so as to impart the values on which the optimal discourse culture for good school-parents' relationship is based.

Vis-à-vis teachers, it is the responsibility of schools to develop programs to empower teachers to cooperate with parents. Hence, schools will build professional development frameworks in which teachers will have to participate and improve relationships with parents

Vis-à-vis teachers and parents, when topics are sensitive, it is desirable that dialogue be led by an agreed upon neutral person.

IV.1.3. Recommendations for Teacher Education Colleges - Pre-Service Training

It is recommended to raise the entry thresholds for teacher education colleges, extend internship periods, strengthen the links between teacher education colleges and schools, introduce courses that are relevant to parents-teacher relationships, oblige student-teachers to participate in all teachers' activities together with their training teachers, including meetings with parents, parent-teacher encounters, committees, field trips and more.

IV.1.4. Recommendations for the Authorities

It is recommended to invest resources and develop a process of training parents to engage in joint educational work with teachers. Parents must be exposed to theoretical knowledge pertaining to parents-teacher relationship including teachers' perceptions and educational approaches.

IV.1.5. Recommendations for Professional Development Frameworks - In-Service Training

As part of the professional development of the teachers in the "New Horizon" program, teachers must be required to study in a school and community course, an empowerment course that will enable teachers to become familiar with different educational approaches in parents-teacher relations, and understand of parents' perceptions of educational involvement in school. Teachers' leadership skills, must be strengthened as well as rhetoric, guidance, simulations, and closed-circuit television.

IV.2. Limitations of The Research

- ✓ **Limitations related to the case study** - the ability to generalize the conclusions. To overcome this limitation, the conclusions relied on various research tools: interviews and questionnaires. Furthermore, recommendations deriving from the findings can be examined in a follow-up study.
- ✓ **Limitations related to the research tool** - this study used semi-structured in-depth interviews and closed-ended questionnaire, which may create social desirability. To overcome this limitation Participants were assured the data would remain confidential and no judgmental feedback was provided so as not to influence the participants and the questionnaires were anonymous and virtual.
- ✓ **Limitations related to the researcher's involvement in school** – that may led to a bias of the data due to unilateral interpretation.. But the researcher's involvement is an advantage, because she knows how to interpret and understand the data best. Expert validity was also used, and therefore the level of confidence in the findings is high.

Limitations related to generalizability - triangulation was used (1) Research tools triangulation (2) Triangulation of the participants: (3) Triangulation of time

IV.3. Contribution to Theoretical Knowledge

The proposed program, which was developed for this research, sheds light on the issue of the relationship between parents and teachers in primary school and narrows the gap regarding to educational partnerships between parents and teachers at school. The program emphasizes several new and original ideas:

1. Building educational partnerships between teachers and parents in primary schools as a step towards improving teachers' status.
2. Intra-school activities that are controlled by partners involved in daily educational activities seeking to improve teachers' status.
3. Examines parents-teacher relationship through teachers' ambivalent perceptions, and at the same time, through parents dual perceptions towards parental involvement in school.
4. Shifting the responsibility for parents-teacher relationship to the schools, from an open-minded perspective rather from a withdrawing, proud defensive position or weakness.
5. Understanding that improvement in teachers' status must come both from within and outside the system

IV.4. Contribution to Practical Knowledge

Schools that define strengthening the relationship between teachers and school parents as an end in itself, can introduce the JEC (Joint Educational Committees) as a school program. Additionally, the program can serve as grounds for a course on teacher and community communication in the local authorities, executive courses, teacher education colleges and, of course, teacher the framework of in-service courses.

In practice, it is important to know that schools are at various stages of educational partnership with their parents. Based on the data gathered in this study and my practical experience as a teacher and principal, I built a model that presents the educational partnership with parents in the school as a four-step ladder: (1) The foundation stage;

(2) the training stage; (3) the specialization stage; (4) Assessment - the optimal educational partnership stage.

The ladder was built in analogy to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, which presents a person's needs in an ascending order of vitality. This is how the relationship between teachers and parents is built, climbing from the most basic stage in the relationship, where teachers and parents are acquainted to the stage of teachers' professionalism is acknowledged, experiencing joint work and the importance of the educational partnership with the parents, to the stage of specialization, implementing JECs to the school's work process and the optimal stage of appreciation and full participation of teachers and parents in educational processes in school. The model emphasizes the process and the educational issues common to teachers and parents rather than a specific timeline. In other words, in order to create stable educational relationships, it is advisable not to skip the ladder steps, but time is not a significant parameter. The processes can be slow or prolonged – quality is what is important. School principals and staff can assess the nature of the educational partnership with the parents, carry out activities, and move along the stages of the ladder according to the school's policy, the maturity of staff and the parents, and the educational issues at hand. Each school defines when it has reached the desired stage in the process, where the optimal stage is a definition of the relationship and the educational partnership with the parents.

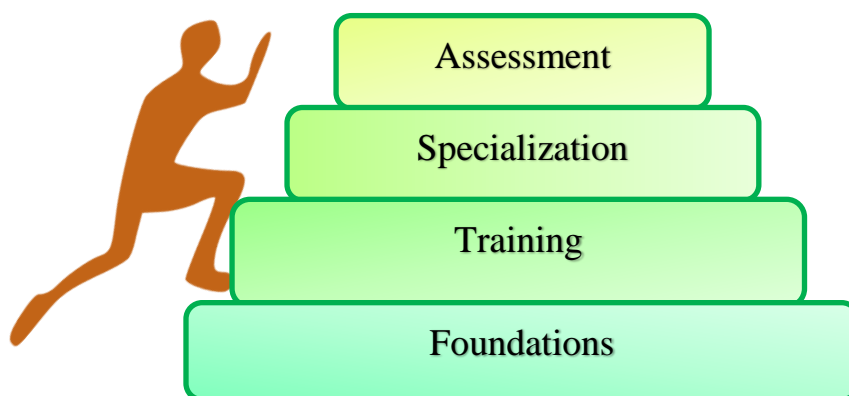


Figure 2.VIII: The four Steps to parent-teacher partnership based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs

IV.5. Future Research

1. It is recommended that follow-up research be conducted with a larger research population.
2. It is recommended that follow-up research be conducted to examine parent-teacher educational partnerships and parents' perceptions towards teachers' status in unique schools which have an orientation towards working with parents and the community.
3. It is recommended to undertake a follow-up research to examine educational partnerships and parents' perceptions towards teachers' status in kindergartens, junior high schools and high schools.
4. It is recommended to undertake follow-up research that will examine parent-teacher educational partnerships parents' perceptions towards teachers' status after both parents and teachers have participated in a joint work preparation based on the model proposed in this research.

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