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**An examination of the impact of a psychodrama-based  
intervention program aimed to develop professional  
identity of special education pre-service teachers**

**DOCTORAL THESIS**

**Long Abstract**

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## INTRODUCTION

During the initial period of their education, pre-service teachers [hereinafter – “PSTs”) are required to deal with various unknown situations, resulting emotional turbulence or flooding. Some of them are related to the PSTs’ first encounter with the actual field, while others are associated with the shaping of their professional identity. The empirical literature indicates that that education programs do not offer an appropriate emotional space for processing emotional and cognitive issues, as well as for the introspection of their feelings and reflecting upon it. This study explores PSTs’ professional identity development. It examines whether participation in the “Sequences – Between Education and Therapy in Teacher Education” Model [hereinafter – “the Sequences Model”], the model presented in this study, can have an effect on the shaping of participants’ professional identity, their level of self-efficacy and level of empathy. The 'Sequences model' is an interdisciplinary model, co-tutored by a pedagogical supervisor and psychodrama therapist and integrating educational contents and therapeutic contents, as well as experiential work from the world of education and psychodrama therapy. The model consists of three spaces of experience and learning: 1. Psychodrama-based group for PSTs and pupils; 2. Supervision group for the PSTs; and 3. Reflective diary. This study is designed for 2 groups, research group and control group. The research group consists of four groups of 6-7 PSTs, having the same characteristics (N=27). The control group comprises 27 PSTs teachers who learn in the same education program, and have not participated in the intervention program. This study has been conducted according to the mixed methods approach, using questionnaires, interviews, and written journals for the purpose of data collection.

This study was partly conducted during the first lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, it was modified in order to enable it to continue without losing the basic perception of the “Sequences Model”. This study investigated the need for delving into emotions within the socio-cultural context of education programs. Moreover, it aimed to bridge the gap in knowledge between the creation of a space for the PST-as-a-person, for professional learning, emotional support, and processing of feelings during the first year of their education period.

## **Research Background**

At the initial stage of becoming PSTs, the professional identity of these individuals has not yet been shaped. The PSTs build new parts of their personal and professional self, face their confused and hectic inner world, having to deal with gaps and contradictions that they experience. At this challenging period, PSTs are required to perform numerous tasks: curricular learning, internalization of disciplinary and inter-disciplinary knowledge, and acquisition of teaching instruments. Moreover, PSTs have to address the transformations in the Israeli education system during the last decade.

The enforcement of the Special Education Act (1988) and the introduction of the inclusion and containment approach into Israeli schools in recent years, necessitated a change in teacher education processes. These changes would enable teachers to cope emotionally and cognitively with the contents, emotions, and feelings they encounter during the learning processes and vis-à-vis different learners. Pupils with special needs who learn in special education frameworks and, today in Israel also in mainstream classes, experience various difficulties, such as learning difficulties, communication disorders, behavior disorders, as well as various cognitive and physical impairments. In many cases, these difficulties directly affect these pupils' learning processes. The educational staff members that meet these children, whether in special education or mainstream classes, need to provide an appropriate and adapted response to these difficulties, deal with them, and demonstrate sensitivity and empathy to these learners, regardless of the feelings evoked in the teachers themselves. This gives rise to the need for acquiring somewhat different and adapted teaching methods and appropriate intra-personal skills for this kind of learning processes. As an integral part of their work, teachers have to develop their emotional world, as well as promote awareness of their feelings and thoughts, and of what transpires within their own self during the inter-personal encounter.

Studies illustrate that current teacher education programs do not comply with the needs of the field. Although teachers are a key factor in the learning process, there are hardly any courses that create space for teachers' needs, feelings and difficulties. Many teacher education programs engage in homogeneous, constructivist learning that, on the one hand, alleviate the PSTs' feelings and, on the other, create a glass ceiling for learning, due to lack of open space for reflection and creation. At the education conference ATEE 2018, it became evident that the dimension of emotions in the process of teacher education has not been sufficiently investigated. The topics indicated were: PSTs' sense of the self, the place of personal

biography, beliefs, and life experience, as well as the time needed for challenging the self-understanding and looking at oneself in a different way (Golan, 2018). One of the main directions of teacher education programs today is viewing teachers as people in a holistic way, relating to their parts, identity, their self, feelings and emotions.

This study proposes a multi-dimensional view of the experience of PSTs who attended the intervention program and the effects thereof on their self-efficacy, empathy levels, and developing professional identity. This is done with reference to the roles they encompass and their professional choices, while looking at the feelings, emotions, and thoughts evoked in them and the way they are affected by the inter-personal relationships established in this unique space.

### **About the researcher**

As a child, I grew up in a home where the language of holistic education was interwoven into the daily discourse. My mother, who for many years was a special education teacher, established and managed a treatment center in the Ministry of Education. This center provides educational and paramedical support for children with special needs in the special education system (MATYA<sup>1</sup> center). The therapeutic and holistic ideas and foundations of this center, which reached our home discourse, advocated the special concern for individuals, their well-being, learner or teacher, and their ability to grow within a meaningful relationship. This approach established the basis to emotional and educational understanding, and directed a special emphasis to person-oriented needs.

As an adult, I became a psychodrama therapist and chose to work with children from special education frameworks of the Ministry of Education. Throughout my way in this field, while engaging in the emotional work with the children, I have constantly strived to engage in practical and emotional work with educational staffs and create spaces for the teacher-as-a-person. This group spaces allow teachers to bring themselves as they are, with their many roles and parts, meet feelings and emotions and observe them in a protected environment, in a propensity to meaningful others. These work groups facilitate ventilation, sharing, support, and acquisition of knowledge about their own world, as well as about the world of the children they work with. Through the groups, teachers are able to express their apprehensions, pains, fears, distress and wishes, examine the response they provide to their pupils and continue in their

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<sup>1</sup> MATYA (an acronym in Hebrew for Center for Locality-Region Support) - 1 A center that functions in cities, villages, and districts

professional identity observation and creation. These groups offer teachers the opportunity for intra- and inter-personal process that is focused on their professional life.

As part of my position as a therapist in a school within the ministry of education, I collaborated with Dr. Ella Sarel-Mahlev, a pedagogical instructor and a lecturer in Levinsky College of Education, Israel, and we have created a model that was implemented as part of Levinsky college of education training program with special education PSTs. The Sequences Model draws its sources from a psychodrama therapy model conceived by Dr. Eliav Naharin, and in our work we have adapted Naharin's model to recent educational and therapeutic approaches. The Sequences Model allows PSTs to develop their empathetic abilities and assess children's needs, all for the benefit of the children. The Sequences Model has created space for emotional growth, processing of feelings evoked during the education period, as well as developing the PSTs' introspective and reflective abilities, their emotional language and their awareness to their inner world.

### **The Thesis Subject**

The intervention program takes place in an elementary school at the center of Israel which includes special education children in mainstream classes. The participants of the intervention program consist of two groups: 1. A psychodrama-based group comprising comprises pupils from the school and PSTs from a college of education, Israel. 2. A supervision group for the PSTs, in which the latter can gain knowledge, share and process thoughts and feelings and belong into a new affiliation group. The supervision group creates the ground for observing the developing professional identity and for enhancing the professional knowledge. The intervention program has developed three axes that served as an engine for shaping the PSTs' professional identity and for raising their sense of self-efficacy and empathy levels.

1. The PSTs' relationship with others- allowed a multi-dimensional encounter with different parts of the self that were reflected from the environment.
2. The PSTs' relationship with their selves- enabled them to delve into personal narratives, roles, needs, wishes, and difficulties, entailing new thoughts and feelings with a view to the professional future as special education teachers.
3. The PSTs' relationships with the psychodrama – the practice enabled movement and dynamics between the roles, feelings and emotions, as well as promotion of parts and sub-identities integration.



## **Gap in Knowledge**

Education programs currently tend to focus on the teacher and to view them holistically as human beings. However, the emotional part of the education process is still at its very beginning and only a few studies have been conducted. The program investigated in this study has been in progress since 2016.

The empirical literature presents studies that explore the way various intervention programs affects special education PSTs' development of professional identity PSTs (Arda Tuncdemir, 2020; Frish, 2021; Goldschmidt & Naftali, 2020); sense of self-efficacy for teaching (Melville & Farran, 2021; Ronen & Weissblitt, 2021) and levels of empathy (Furuness & Esteves, 2021; James et al., 2021; Sorbet & Graybeal, 2021). However, there is no empirical literature about a psychodrama program for special education PSTs that focuses on the development of professional identity with an emphasis on self-efficacy and empathy.

This study examines whether the proposed model assists in the development of PSTs' empathy, self-efficacy level and professional identity. It aims to bridge the gap not only in the academia. The processes that the PSTs undergo when entering the world of education, outline a path for them and set the foundations that will lead teachers in their future professional way.

## **Research Aims**

1. To examine how a psychodrama-based intervention program increased self-efficacy level of special education PSTs.
2. To examine how a psychodrama-based intervention program increased empathy level of special education PSTs.
3. To examine how a psychodrama-based intervention program impacted special education PSTs' development of professional identity.
4. To examine the effect of a psychodrama-based intervention program on the strength of the variables: self-efficacy, empathy, and professional identity among the PSTs who participated in the program.

## **Significance of the research**

This study makes a considerable contribution, first by improving and developing an Israeli and global perspective about the issue of special education teacher education. This enhances the wide Puzzle and the important project of expanding the teacher-as-a-person and the emotional

parts of special education teachers' way of working during their education stage; the consolidation of a way of working that focuses on teachers as people, allocating room to their feelings, emotions, and thoughts; and acknowledgement of these meanings when working in such a sensitive area as special education.

In recent years, it has become necessary in the educational field to create a space for developing PSTs' professional identity during the process of their education. Hence, this study attributes importance to the creation of such a space in which PSTs can learn and experience and which offers a PST-supervisor-materials discourse. In this space, the world of the children and of the PSTs can be observed and investigated, while examining the relationship between evoked feelings, roles, and the developing professional identity.

Mediating learning under conditions of direct exposure to stimuli of children's world and the PSTs' inner world by means of psychodrama techniques is at the center of this study. The study emphasizes options of coping and proposes a guided discovery underpinned by the perception that knowledge is built and uncovered by interaction with the environment. Thus, the Sequences Model proposes a constructivist space, in which tension is maintained between two curriculum types. On the one hand an open curriculum, in which PSTs discover the knowledge and, on the other hand, a closed curriculum that relies on frontal teaching that combines delivery of knowledge and relevant theoretical materials. The objective is to consolidate a sense of confidence in delving into complex contents that arise at the beginning of the education process that is crucial for special education teachers and their professional future in every special education framework around the world.

### **Research Boundaries**

This study examined the effect of participation in a psychodrama-based intervention program on PSTs' development of self-efficacy, empathy levels and professional identity. Moreover, the program was implemented at a teacher education college at the center of Israel during the academic years 2019-2020. This study was conducted according to the mixed methods approach, whereby the quantitative research was followed by qualitative research.

## **Thesis Structure**

This thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter I discusses the relevant theories and literature review connected with the topic of the study. Chapter II delineates the methodological considerations that underpinned the implementation of the research. Chapter III presents the findings obtained from the research according to the order of the research aims, research questions and research hypotheses. Chapter IV provides a thorough discussion of the findings with reference to the theoretical foundation and literature review. Chapter V includes the conclusions, recommendations, practical implications, and limitations of this study. The thesis ends with contribution to knowledge and suggestions for further research.

**Key words:** special-education, PSTs, professional identity, self-efficacy for teaching, empathy, psychodrama, teacher education.

## **Chapter I: Theoretical Perspectives and literature review**

### **I.1 Views of Constructivism**

Constructivism is a comprehensive name for philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, sociological and methodological approaches. The common argument of all these approaches is that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered or transferred (Suhendi et al., 2021; Yechieli, 2008). Harpaz (2000) maintains that constructivism is a mix of theories, perceptions and ideologies. According to the pedagogical approach, Constructivism is an educational learning theory, describing the main role of constantly changing mental schemes of learners during their cognitive growth. This theory is related to the cognitive psychology and it underscores learners' part in the learning process. Moreover, it encourages active learning, while objecting to people's image as passive learners who absorb stimuli and react to them, an image that establishes the behavioristic learning theories (Yechieli, 2008). Learning transpires through a process of practice, by way of knowledge construction and learners' responsibility for the knowledge.

## **I.2 Special Education Teaching**

### ***I.2.1 Historical background***

Special education is defined as teaching that is designed in a special form in order to respond to the special needs of children with learning disabilities and prolonged learning difficulties, while distinguishing between the various types of disabilities and the implications thereof. Special education aims to rehabilitate challenged children, preparing them towards ordinary social and professional life as much as possible, according to their abilities. Hence, we have to strive to implement most of the educational and therapeutic means that facilitate these children's integration into mainstream educational frameworks (Ronen, 2007).

### ***I.2.2 The inclusion and containment method***

The education system is undergoing a process of in-depth change in the status of children with special needs. The humanistic perception that underpins the concept of inclusion and containment is that children defined as having special needs, are entitled to equal rights as normative children, who are not disabled. Hence, the basic right of children with special needs is to learn together with their peers, in the same education system (Kefallinou et al., 2020). The leading vision on which the inclusion and containment approach is based, encompasses the following values: (a) nurturing a society that respects every person and believes in the basic right of every person to experience a sense of belonging, while acknowledging and accepting the uniqueness of each and every individual; (b) establishing a variety of educational institutions that reflect a containing, inclusive and humanistic society, in which varied forms of differentiation can co-exist; (c) adjusting the teaching, learning and assessment methods in order to allow all learners to fully exhaust their capabilities (Ministry of Education, 2019).

## **I.3 Pre-Service Teacher Education**

According to the traditional perception, teacher education was built of an organized system of academic courses, supported by clinical experience, the function of which was to clarify and demonstrate what had been learnt in the academic course (Korthagen, 2001a, 2001b). The changing reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, required re-thinking in the field of teacher education. This resulted in a transition which put an extensive and focused emphasis on the field", while examining the link between research and practice (Furlong, 2013; Mattson et al., 2011; Moore, 2010; Zeichner, 2010). Many education programs expanded the time dedicated to practical

experience, and the link between teacher education institutions and the training schools became tighter. Other education programs highlighted the process by which knowledge was created, by directing PSTs to act by way of inquiry and problem solution. The acknowledgment that teacher education should become more meaningful for the PSTs (Ten Dam, & Bloom, 2006), gave rise to the idea that the link between the practical and academic experience should be tightened, by exposing PSTs to a wide range of school practice, while directing them to implement meta-cognitive processes at all stages of the education and practice (Waege & Haugalokken, 2013).

### ***1.3.1 Reflection in teacher education***

During the last 20 years since the development of the reflective approach in teaching, the importance of reflection in teaching has increasingly grown. Most of the teacher education programs have adopted reflective tools during the education process (Hahl, 2021; K rkk , 2021; Sert, 2021). According to researchers (e.g., Ran & Josefsberg Ben-Yehoshua, 2020), there has been only a limited use of knowledge infrastructures and expertise-level skills development in teacher education programs.

## **1.4 Teachers' Professional Development**

### ***1.4.1 Teachers' professional identity***

During the last decade, the research of professional identity in teaching has grown and expanded and today, it has a central place in the empirical discourse (Frish, 2021; Huang & Wang, 2021; Siahaan & Subekti, 2021). Nevertheless, the literature indicates that the definition of professional identity is complex, requiring an in-depth comprehension of the relation between the identity and the self, as well as an understanding of the role of emotions in the process of identity formation, of the reflective process and its effect on the identity consolidation (Chan, 2004; Shapiro, 2009). that conducting a discourse about the role of emotions in education is important as a way of expanding the role perception, professional identity, positions, perceptions, and skills required for being a teacher. A deeper perception of the comprehension of the professional identity at the pre-service stage, will assist in the accurate creation of pre-service teaching programs that match the PSTs' needs and the development of their professional identity. Consolidation of the self-identity is basically a communicational process (Mead, 1934) and it comprises a process of adopting social identities by individuals and integrating the multiple identities.

#### **I.4.2 Professional identity**

Studies of teachers' professional identity engage in two main approaches. The first approach relates to researchers who explore teachers' interpretation of their work and professional identity, or their professional life narrative. Hence, professional identity is subjective. The second approach refers to researchers who discuss various components of professional identity. They maintain that the term 'professional identity' is objective and can be measured (Fisherman, 2018). Fisherman cites different researchers and argues that teachers' professional identity affects their sense of self-efficacy and their readiness to cope with educational changes (Beijaard et al., 2004; Fisherman, 2018); teachers' behaviors, work method, form of thinking, beliefs and statements (Altman & Katz, 2001, cited in Fisherman, 2018); their effectiveness (Day et al., 2006); their commitment, job satisfaction, and motivation (Kelchtermans, 2009); and their burnout and dropout from the field of education (Fisherman, 2016).

#### **I.5 Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to affect events that impact one's life and control over the way these events are experienced (Bandura, 1994). In "An Agentic Perspective on Positive Psychology", Bandura (2008) proposes that anyone, regardless of their traits, past, or current environment has the ability to exercise and strengthen their self-efficacy.

#### **I.6 Empathy**

Discussing teacher-learner relationships and teachers' possibility of understanding and containing their pupils is linked to the term 'empathy' which is, in many senses, the basis of the relationship between individuals and the others. The word empathy originated from the word *empathia* in Greek, meaning "physical affection". The term 'empathy' and its different levels has been discussed and investigated for many years. Over the years, various theoreticians have defined this term in varied way and each researcher emphasized empathy out of their world and way. Thus, for example, Kohut (1971) defined empathy as individual's attempt to experience the internal life of others, remaining simultaneously also in the position of external observer (Kahn, 1985). This definition relates to the emotional meaning that individuals experience and integrates psychological aspects of the ego. Empathy serves as an alternative emotional reaction to feelings that we perceive when they are experienced by others (Kahn, 1985; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972).

## **I.7 Aspects of the Role Theory in the Various Fields**

The extensive conceptual units derived from the Role Theory are: role in a cultural unit, position as a social unit, and the self as a unit of personality (Markus, 1977). A role is a set of actions performed by individuals (Kahn et al., 1959; Kahn et al., 1964), and it encompasses expected behaviors in different social systems. Its performance is affected by the social environment that shapes and defines the expectations from the role, and the role requirements are derived from them (Biddle & Thomas, 1979). Expectations from the role are a key term of the Role Theory, since they create a conceptual bridge between individuals and the social structure (Burgess et al., 1963; Sarbin, 1969).

## **I.8 Psychodrama**

Psychodrama is an experiential psychotherapy developed by J.L. Moreno (Riva et al., 2020), in which individuals use spontaneous dramatization, guided role-play, and dramatic self-presentation to investigate and gain insight into their lives (Blatner & Blatner, 1988; Orkibi & Feniger-Schaal, 2019). Psychodrama exists within the triadic system developed by Moreno: psychodrama, sociometry, and group psychotherapy. Frequently, the use of the term “psychodrama” relates to the entire triadic system. According to the Morenean philosophy, each of the triad components touches the others and stem from the Existential Theory conceived by Moreno (2019). This study focuses on psychodrama, nevertheless, acquaintance with group sociometry and psychotherapy, as viewed by Moreno, are essential for understanding this study.

### ***I.8.1 Group supervision***

Supervision is an inseparable part of the current practice of the therapeutic-educational system when it responds to permanent and changing needs of the system and of the staff itself. Supervision in this study is inter-disciplinary, and integrates contents from the field of psychodrama therapy and education. The supervision group serves as the soil for observation of personal and professional processes; the personal materials and unique needs of the supervised individual or the group are at the center as a platform, and as an arch-view, as a parallel process, of what occurs in the psychodrama group. The supervision process aims to help the supervisees in acquiring professional skills, processing contents that arise in them vis-à-vis the children, developing empathy and self-efficacy, and consolidate a role-oriented identity.

## **I.9 The Intervention Program**

### ***I.9.1 The Sequences Model***

The model entitled “Sequences – Between Education and Therapy in Teacher Education” [hereinafter – “The Sequences Model”] is an interdisciplinary model, that comprises three areas of training and experience: 1. psychodrama-based group for PSTs and pupils; 2. a supervision group for the PSTs that educational contents and therapeutic contents, as well as experiential-psychodramatic work; and 3. Reflective diaries. The model is co-tutored by a pedagogical supervisor and a psychodrama therapist, and encompasses contents from the worlds of education and therapy, while promoting and enhancing the discourse and relationships between these two worlds in the school space. The model aims to promote teacher’ acquaintance with himself as a person, promote a team acquaintance that is multi-systemic, linguistic, and interpersonal. The Sequences Model presents an intervention that links the educational approach to the therapeutic approach. It is based on both the power of the group and on the common creation that assists in understanding the self and the other, and in the development of an inter-personal interaction.

The model underpinning the intervention program was developed in 2016 by Shiran Pines-Cohen, a psychodrama therapist and supervisor, in collaboration with Dr. Ella Sarel-Mahlev, a pedagogical supervisor and lecturer at Levinsky College of Education, Israel. Since 2016, the model has been part of the partnership between Levinsky College of Education, Tel Aviv, and Avigur School in Ramat Gan. The model derives its sources from the “co-therapy” model conceived by Dr. Eliav Naharin (1985), while adapting the current model to the contents studied in the pre-service education program and to the educational-therapeutic work at an inclusive school. In 2020, the model has been revised due to the COVID-19 pandemic quarantine and the closing down of schools in Israel. The program continued as an online framework, while making relevant adaptations to the options offered by the period and PSTs’ emotional and professional needs, while maintaining the principles of the model.

### ***I.9.2 Aims of the intervention program***

- Developing the educators’ unique professional identity vis-à-vis the therapeutic world.
- Getting acquainted with the treatment room within the school space in order to assist in building the therapeutic-educational sequence to which educators are partners.



- Improving the comprehension of the child's inner world and identifying their emotional needs.
- Preparing the PSTs for future situations in their professional life as teachers.
- Coping with educational challenges and finding problem-solving alternative.
- Developing the PSTs' reflective capabilities by connection to their past experiences as children, pupils, and students.
- Improving skills for individual and group work with pupils, as well as for teamwork.
- Developing the PSTs' sense of competence.

## **CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY**

### **II.1 Research Questions**

1. How did participating in a psychodrama-based intervention program increase self-efficacy level of special education PSTs?
2. How did participating in a psychodrama-based intervention program increase empathy level of special education PSTs?
3. How did participating in a psychodrama-based intervention program impact the development of professional identity?
4. What is the effect of a psychodrama-based intervention program on the strength of the variables: self-efficacy, empathy and professional identity among the PSTs participating in the program?

### **II.2 Research Hypotheses**

1. Participation in the intervention program will strengthen the PSTs' self-efficacy level.
2. Participation in the intervention program will increase the PSTs' empathy level.
3. Participation in the intervention program will facilitate the development of PSTs' professional identity.
4. Participation in the intervention program will have a gradual positive effect on the strength of the PSTs' self-efficacy, empathy and professional identity.

## **II.3 Variables**

*Dependent Variables:* empathy, self-efficacy, and professional identity.

*Independent variables:*

participating in the intervention program

*Confounding variables:*

A set of background variables regarding age and previous experience.

## **II.4 Research Paradigm and Approach: Mixed Methods Research**

This study aims to consolidate an extensive and in-depth insight of the intervention program and its effect on the professional identity of 1<sup>st</sup> year special education PSTs. This study engages in the point of contact of two complex factors: processes of the intervention program and the people experiencing them, while relating to the dialectics formed between the two factors. This complexity entailed the choice of a mixed methods paradigm, both quantitative and qualitative methods in a narrative approach. The main reason for choosing the mixed methods approach was connecting a great number of mental models into one space of investigation. The objective was to conduct a respectful discourse, mutual dialogue and learning in order to attain a branched and layered understanding of the investigated phenomenon (Greene, 2007).

### **Quantitative research**

The quantitative research facilitates an extensive data collection, as well as a concise and easy-to-understand description of the data (Birenboim, 1997), and is suitable for checking frequency, estimation and generalization (Lee, 1999). This type of research allows getting acquainted with personality properties and positions associated with the PSTs' professional identity and the frequency thereof.

The quantitative research enables:

- Statistical comparisons of groups
- Statistical comparisons of different points of time
- Examination of relationships between variables.

### **Qualitative research**

The use of the constructivist-qualitative methodology is underpinned by the assumption that researchers and the object of the investigation cannot be separated. The individuals and their world are interdependent. The observers are part of what is being observed, and what

they see shapes what they define, measure and analyze. In this situation, researchers remain close to the experience and their subjective description is a vital factor of the understanding. The practical meaning of this assumption is that one cannot talk in absolute terms about scientific objectivity, but rather about an optimal representation of complex social phenomena by means of narratives (Leiblich et al., 1998). The constructivist worldview advocates that reality is not an external objective fact. Rather, it is a dynamic process, whereby people interpret their interaction with the world and with other subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

**Table No. II.1: Research Stages**

Stage	Aim	Research methods	Research instruments	Participants	Data Analysis
<b>Stage 1</b> <b>Pre-intervention</b>	To validate the comparative questionnaire	Surveys	Questionnaires <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>A professional identity questionnaire (Fisherman &amp; Weiss, 2010)</b></li> <li>- <b>New General Self-Efficacy Scale (Chen et al., 2001)</b></li> <li>- <b>Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1980)</b></li> </ul>	-Intervention group (4 groups, N=27) -Control group (N=27)	Descriptive statistics, matching analysis, pre-intervention comparison
<b>Stage 2</b> <b>During-intervention</b>	1.To examine how a psychodrama-based intervention program increased self-	Students' diaries	-Written reflections	intervention group (4 groups, N=27)	growth curve modeling, within group development model content analysis

	<p>efficacy level of special education PSTs.</p> <p>2. To examine how a psychodrama-based intervention program increased empathy level of special education PSTs .</p> <p>3. To examine how a psychodrama-based intervention program impacted special education PSTs' development of professional identity.</p>				
<p><b>Stage 3</b></p> <p><b>Post-intervention</b></p>	<p>1. To examine how a psychodrama-based intervention program increased self-efficacy level of special education PSTs.</p> <p>2. To examine how a psychodrama-based</p>	<p>Surveys</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Students' diaries</p>	<p>-Questionnaires</p> <p>Interview guide</p> <p>- Written reflections</p>	<p>- intervention group (4 groups, N=27)</p> <p>-Control group(N=27)</p>	<p>two time point comparison, change score, between group comparison</p> <p>content analysis</p>

	<p>intervention program increase empathy level of special education PSTs .</p> <p>3. To examine how a psychodrama-based intervention program impacted special education PSTs' development of professional identity.</p>				
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**CHAPTER III: FINDINGS**

**III.1 Findings Obtained from Research Question No. 1 with Reference to Research Hypothesis No. 1**

**Table No. III.2: Themes and Categories within the findings**

	<i>Theme 1: Increase of self-efficacy level</i>	<i>Theme 2: Increase of empathy level</i>	<i>Theme 3: Development of professional identity</i>
<i>Category 1</i>	The relationship with another as a factor that increases the sense of self-efficacy	The encounter with various roles as a factor that develops empathy	Expanding the range of roles as a factor for professional identity consolidation
<i>Category 2</i>	Observation of others as a factor which develops the sense of self-efficacy	The group as a structure that develops empathy	Engagement in unconscious conflicts as a catalyst for the consolidation of identity.

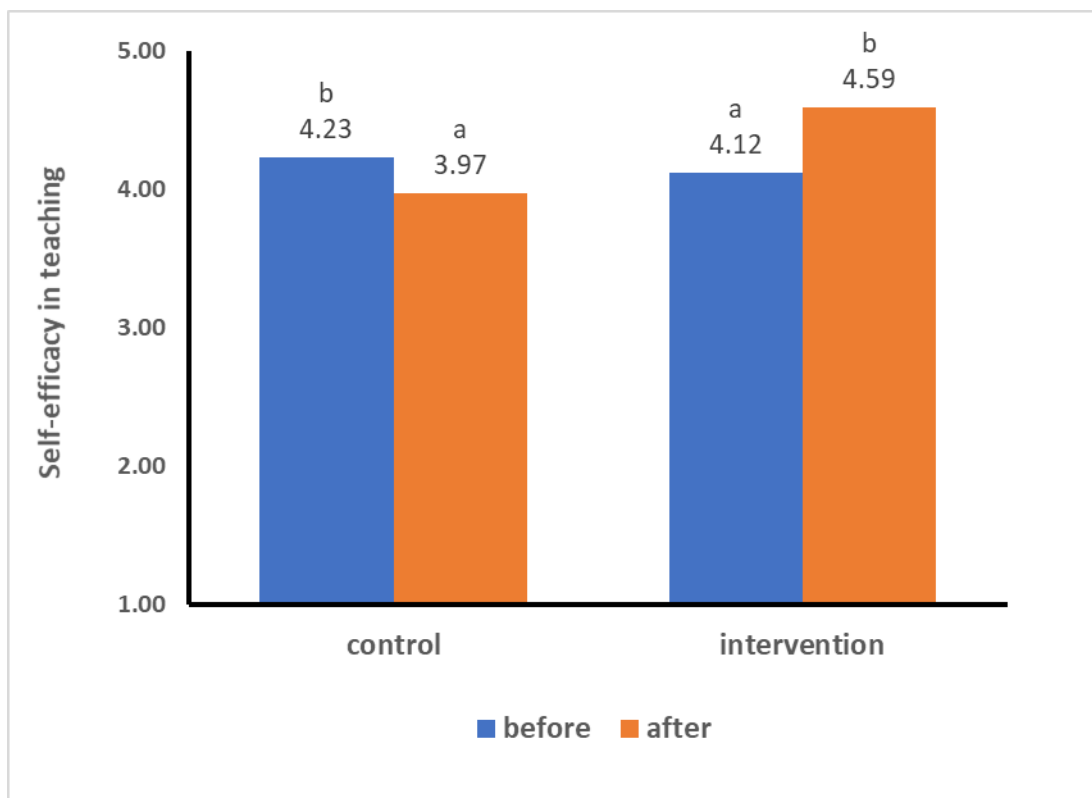
<b>Category 3</b>	Acquaintance with the roles system as a factor which affects self-efficacy	The relationship with the group facilitators as factor that develops empathy	Enhancing acquaintance with the biography as a factor that facilitates the professional identity consolidation
<b>Category 4</b>	Development of regulation capabilities as a factor that increases self-efficacy	Listening to life stories as a factor that develops empathy	The interaction with others as a factor that develops awareness and consolidates professional identity
<b>Category 5</b>	Practice of being within the not knowing, intra-personal gaps and contradictions as a factor that increases self-efficacy	The psychodramatic work as a factor that develops empathy	Internalization of figures as a factor that facilitates professional identity consolidation
<b>Category 6</b>	Practice and completion of tasks as factors that increase self-efficacy		Enhancing the sense of belonging to the field of special education
<b>Category 7</b>	The psychodramatic process as a factor that increases self-efficacy		The psychodramatic process as a factor that facilitates the professional identity consolidation

### III.1.1 Quantitative findings

**Table No. III.3: Test of Hypothesis No. 1 - Self-efficacy in teaching by group and time**

Time	Group		Time X Group							
	Control	Interv.	Wald	Control	Interv.	Wald	Control	Interv.	Control	Interv.
Wald	Before	After	Wald	Control	Interv.	Wald	Before	After	Before	After
1.72	4.17	4.28	4.98*	4.10	4.35	30.60***	4.23 <sup>b</sup>	3.97 <sup>a</sup>	4.12 <sup>a</sup>	4.59 <sup>b</sup>
	(0.07)	(0.07)		(0.09)	(0.07)		(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.07)

\*\*\* p<.001, \*\* p<.01, \* p<.05, ~ p<.10; Interv. – intervention; standard errors in parentheses.



**Figure No. III.1: Self-efficacy in teaching by group and time**

Hypothesis 1 was confirmed.



### III.1.2 Qualitative findings

- Category 1: the relationship with another as a factor that increases the sense of self-efficacy

*“One of the meaningful things in the group was the close relationships established between us. Intimacy and sense of safety were created between us and we could share almost any feeling. we were really there for each other and that was empowering”.*

## III.2 Findings Obtained from Research Question No. 2 with Reference to Research Hypothesis No. 2

### III.2.1 Quantitative findings

**Table No. III.4: Hypothesis No. 2 – IRI – Inter-Personal Reactivity Index by group and time. Hypothesis 2 was confirmed.**

Measure	Time		Group		Time X Group						
	Wald	Before	After	Wald	Control	Interv.	Wald	Before	After	Before	After
FS	3.48~	3.12 (0.12)	3.33 (0.13)	.05	3.20 (0.15)	3.25 (0.15)	14.93****	3.29 <sup>a</sup> (0.16)	3.10 <sup>a</sup> (0.18)	2.95 <sup>a</sup> (0.17)	3.55 <sup>b</sup> (0.17)
EC	6.38*	3.95 (0.10)	4.21 (0.07)	.65	4.02 (0.09)	4.14 (0.12)	8.20**	4.02 <sup>a</sup> (0.13)	4.01 <sup>a</sup> (0.09)	3.88 <sup>a</sup> (0.15)	4.40 <sup>b</sup> (0.11)
PT	7.81**	3.74 (0.11)	4.07 (0.09)	2.59	3.77 (0.10)	4.03 (0.12)	18.57****	3.82 <sup>a</sup> (0.13)	3.71 <sup>a</sup> (0.12)	3.66 <sup>a</sup> (0.16)	4.41 <sup>b</sup> (0.12)
PD	3.98*	3.14 (0.09)	2.94 (0.09)	4.54*	3.19 (0.12)	2.88 (0.08)	28.14****	3.08 <sup>a</sup> (0.13)	3.32 <sup>a</sup> (0.13)	3.19 <sup>b</sup> (0.10)	2.57 <sup>a</sup> (0.10)

FS-Fantasy scale, EC-empathic concern scale, PT-perspective taking scale, PD-personal distress scale.

### III.2.2 Qualitative findings

- Category 1: The encounter with various roles as a factor that develops empathy

*“One of the encounters in the children’s group was far from simple for me. The girl with whom I worked was the quietest girl in the group. She did not want to cooperate with me, she was just silent, throughout the encounter. I was really angry with her. I was unable to get her out of her silence. It was almost impossible to be with her there during these moments. I really tried understanding her but I was only angry”.*

In the supervision group, the PST was invited to build the scene of silence in which she became angry. She used one member of the group as an auxiliary ego, playing the role of the accompanying PST vis-à-vis the silent girl.

*“I felt my helplessness, when I asked the girl to talk and she did not cooperate with me. I felt that I was not meaningful for her at all. All the other children in the group around us were talking, only she was silent”.*

### III.3 Findings Obtained from Research Question No. 3 with Reference to Research Hypothesis No. 3

#### III.3.1 Qualitative findings

Hypothesis 3 was partially confirmed.

**Table No. III.5: Hypothesis 3 – Teachers’ professional identity by group and time**

Measure	Time		Group		Time X Group						
	Wald	Before	After	Wald	Control	Interv.	Wald	Before	After	Before	After
General	0.11	3.22	3.25	3.55~	3.16	3.32	12.84***	3.26 <sup>a</sup>	3.05 <sup>a</sup>	3.19 <sup>a</sup>	3.44 <sup>b</sup>
		(0.06)	(0.05)		(0.06)	(0.06)		(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.07)
1	0.40	3.19	3.25	6.21*	3.08	3.36	17.65***	3.21 <sup>a</sup>	2.94 <sup>a</sup>	3.17 <sup>a</sup>	3.55 <sup>b</sup>
		(0.07)	(0.07)		(0.09)	(0.07)		(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.08)
2	0.05	3.31	3.33	1.34	3.26	3.38	6.27*	3.34 <sup>a</sup>	3.17 <sup>a</sup>	3.28 <sup>a</sup>	3.49 <sup>a</sup>

		(0.07)	(0.07)		(0.08)	(0.08)		(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)
3	0.48	3.39	3.33	0.19	3.34	3.38	8.02**	3.47 <sup>a</sup>	3.20 <sup>a</sup>	3.31 <sup>a</sup>	3.46 <sup>a</sup>
		(0.07)	(0.07)		(0.07)	(0.08)		(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.08)
4	1.93	3.16	3.30	0.80	3.17	3.29	3.05	3.19	3.15	3.13	3.44
		(0.09)	(0.08)		(0.10)	(0.09)		(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.10)

1. Confidence in the professional choice, 2. Self-efficacy to be a teacher, 3. Sense of mission, 4. Teaching reputation

### ***III.3.2 Qualitative findings***

According to the PSTs, the psychodramatic work promoted understandings of the role perception, development of beliefs and positions regarding the development of skills associated with emotional work with children. The PSTs depicted the psychodramatic mirror technique as a facilitator of observation from the outside, promotion of insights, and development of positions and perceptions about special education teachers, elements that they would be able to use in their professional future. The PSTs' words illustrated that the psychodramatic work opened for them a space of emotional expression, presentation of conscious and unconscious contents, development of introspection and option for deliberating the known and familiar patterns in the new context, while having a possibility for change. They pointed out that the perception learned and experienced in the program was manifested by the interpretation of new actions that became familiar, as well as the ideal that constituted an infrastructure for explaining and learning new behaviors.

To sum up, the psychodramatic work developed insights related to the professional identity, and enhanced the creation of a mental movement towards integrative processes that originated in the experience.

### **III.4 Findings Obtained from Research Question No. 4 with Reference to Research Hypothesis No. 4**

Hypothesis 4 was confirmed.

Research question No. 4 used the qualitative findings collected from all the reflective diaries that the PSTs had written throughout the intervention program. The findings were grouped into

three themes: self-efficacy for teaching, empathy, and professional identity. During the 12 sessions of the model, the PSTs engaged in intra-personal inquiry processes, as well as vis-à-vis meaningful others. This entailed the creation of conditions under which the PSTs could develop. The qualitative findings were coded and converted into the quantitative findings presented below.

**Table No. III.6: Individual's growth curve model results, random slopes**

	Empathy			Professional identity			Self-Efficacy		
	Coeff	SE	95%CI	Coeff	SE	95%CI	Coeff	SE	95%CI
<b>Means</b>									
Intercept	1.85***	0.28	[1.34, 2.44]	7.44**	0.83	[6.02, 9.24]	2.44**	0.43	[1.69, 3.35]
Slope	0.87***	0.11	[0.65, 1.07]	1.37**	0.12	[1.15, 1.59]	0.81**	0.10	[0.63, 1.01]
<b>Variances</b>									
Intercept	0.52	1.09	[-1.37, 2.93]	9.43*	3.71	[2.69, 16.33]	1.44	0.87	[0.29, 2.81]
Slope	0.23**	0.09	[0.09, 0.45]	0.05	0.09	[-0.10, 0.24]	0.10	0.04*	[0.03, 0.22]
Covariance (int*slope)	-0.22	0.23	[-0.99, 0.15]	1.27*	0.52	[0.26, 2.22]	-0.15	0.18	[-0.47, 0.21]
AIC	1671.96			1975.07			1672.14		
BIC	1693.99			1997.10			1694.17		

To sum up, the Sequences Model with the psychodrama-based intervention program at its core, was characterized by a gradual development of the main concepts included in teachers' professional development: self-efficacy for teaching, empathy, and professional identity in teaching.

## **CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS**

### **IV.1 Factual Conclusions Obtained from Research Question No. 1**

Research question No. 1: How did participating in a psychodrama-based intervention program increase self-efficacy level of special education PSTs?

The conclusion drawn from research question No. 1 was that professional education of special education PSTs, shaped by means of psychodrama, was associated with the establishment of relationships with meaningful others. This was facilitated in the psychodrama-based and supervision groups. In these groups, at the center of which were values of compassion, empathy, acceptance, and hope, the group members and group supervisors gave positive feedbacks. Moreover, there was an option to respond optimally for the group members, as well as be supported by others in the group, or by the group supervisors. The two poles of this roles – 'supporting-supported' – and the option of playing them in an active and authentic way in the group, served the PSTs in building their sense of self-efficacy for teaching.

Within the group matrix, the PSTs who had participated in the intervention program, could observe the work processes of the group members. Another factual conclusion obtained from research question No. 1 was that the development of a professional identity by means of a psychodrama-based intervention program was related to observation of the group members' achievements. The group members who were similar to the PSTs in their characteristics, enabled social learning and allowed the PSTs to imagine their success in a similar task. Thus, in fact, it improved the sense of self-efficacy for learning among PSTs who took part in the program.

Another conclusion drawn from the main tool that the intervention program used was that the development of identity by means of the psychodrama-based intervention program was characterized by the use of tools from the theater and playing that encouraged spontaneity and creativity, validated the use of imagination and playing in the educational space. All these

enabled connection to sources of hope, optimism, positive thinking, resources, and empowerment. Through this process, the psychodramatic work assisted in the expansion of the emotional awareness and the self-knowledge, language development, as well as development of the self-regulation which developed the sense of self-efficacy of the PSTs who participated in the intervention program.

## **IV.2 Factual Conclusions Obtained from Research Question No. 2**

Research question No. 2: How did participating in a psychodrama-based intervention program increase empathy level of special education PSTs?

A conclusion drawn from research question No. 2 was that the development of professional identity by means of the psychodrama-based intervention program was related to the option of a reflective process that assisted the PSTs in getting acquainted with their inner world and the setup of roles in it. The focus on the developing professional identity and the roles that emerged out of it, facilitated acquaintance of the ambivalence in the self and in the world, motivating integration processes in the self, tolerance, acceptance, and empathy for others.

Another conclusion drawn from research question No. 2 was that the development of professional identity by means of a psychodrama-based intervention program was associated with the PSTs' option of experiencing in the groups a set of close and meaningful relationship. This matrix of relationships brought about empathic responses to the PST as a person, a subject that enabled support, alleviating the harms and rage that emerged during the work with the children, serving as a healing substance and a growing nurturing of emotional empathy parts. These responses served as a material for understanding and learning the parts of the cognitive empathy.

## **IV.3 Factual Conclusions Obtained from Research Question No. 3**

Research question No. 3: How did participating in a psychodrama-based intervention program impact the development of professional identity?

Upon entrance to the initial training process, the PSTs were exposed to new information and, during that process, intra-personal or inter-personal dynamics transpired. In addition to the richness of content and PSTs' insights about themselves, they frequently experience a

psychological discomfort, and a sense of cognitive or emotional non-compliance. Hence, they might have felt that their needs and basic values were threatened. The emerging conflict described a situation of non-compliance or clash between or within identity components. As a result, the PSTs were driven to explore identity alternatives, choose, or combine them into a subjective solution. The conclusion drawn from research question No. 3 was that the consolidation of professional identity by means of a psychodrama-based intervention process was characterized by a contextual encounter within the group, and by the embodied option of thinking and speaking about intra-personal and inter-personal conflicts, that had created a meta-cognitive and reflective action. This activity raised questions about the option of changing the identity and adapting it to the environment, as well as changing perceptions within the PSTs. Moreover, it assisted in conducting an intra-personal discourse between the PSTs' sub-identities and, hence, achieve a better compliance between them.

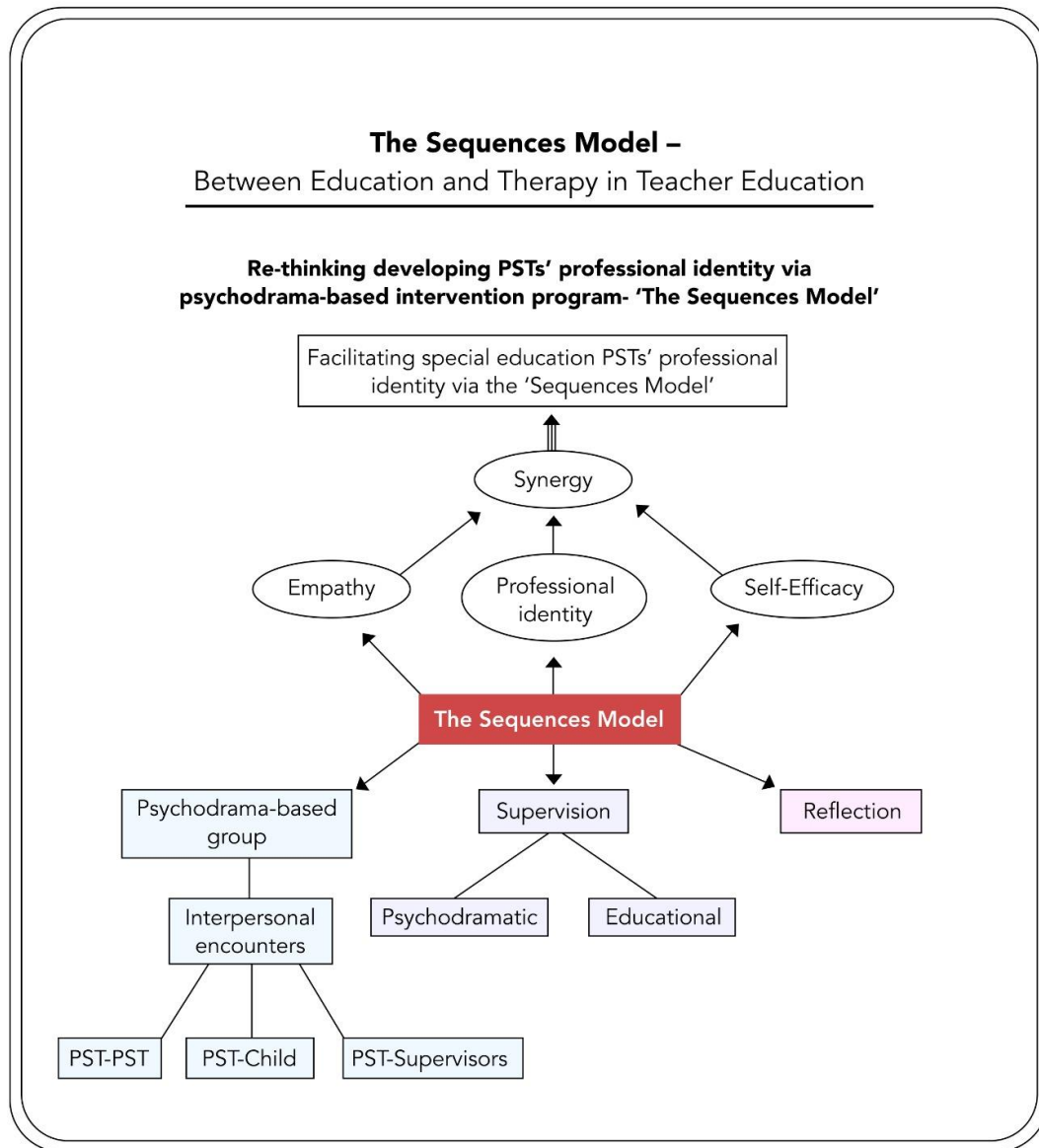
#### **IV.4 Factual Conclusions Obtained from Research Question No. 4**

Research question No. 4: What is the effect of a psychodrama-based intervention program on the strength of the variables: self-efficacy, empathy and professional identity among the PSTs participating in the program?

A conclusion drawn from research question No. 4 was that the consolidation of a professional identity by means of a psychodrama-based intervention program was characterized by a gradual development of the key terms included in teachers' professional development.

## IV.5 Conceptual Conclusions: Facilitation of Special Education PSTs' Professional Identity by Means of a Psychodrama-Based Intervention Program

Figure No. IV.1 presents a visual model that has resulted from this study.



**Figure No. IV.1: The Sequences Model**



Figure No. V.1 illustrates the "Sequences – Between Education and Therapy in Teacher Education" model. The model offers interdisciplinary learning which integrates aspects of special education with psychodramatic perceptions and approaches, in a directed relating to the common areas of knowledge in an educational framework. The starting point of the program is, in fact, the field of special education, However, the model strives to break down the barriers between educational and emotional areas, including psychodrama. It attempts identifying conceptual uniformity, while emphasizing mutual effects, boundaries of the system, emotional organization, and uniqueness of the specific-functional setting of the inclusive education system and those involved in it.

The model focuses on three spaces:

- (1) The psychodrama-based group that included inter-personal encounters on three axes: PST-child, PST-PST, PST-supervisors.
- (2) Supervision group for the PSTs.
- (3) Reflective diary in which the PSTs wrote an entry every week after the meetings. The group supervisors responded to the entries from educational and emotional viewpoints.

The PSTs joined the psychodrama program at an early and preliminary stage of the training program. In the work group they practiced the use of techniques from the world of psychodrama, the theater, expression and creation. Thus, the PSTs learned about the world of the children and practiced accompanying them throughout the group process. During the inter-personal encounters of the psychodrama-based group (or the PST-child personal encounters outside the group), the PSTs met parts in themselves that stimulated emotional and cognitive contents. This led to wonderings, confusion, emotional flooding, necessitating support and emotional nurturing, in order to create an emotional organization and receive answer to the questions raised within them.

The supervision group constituted a designated space for the PSTs. It was created for the purpose of providing a stable and safe soil for investigating, exploring, and receiving practical knowledge about the processes that transpired in the group. At the same time, the PSTs examined their developing professional identity with the support and assistance of the group supervisors.

The reflective diaries aimed to continue an introspective inquiry, processing of the contents and engagement in them. The supervisors responded to the blogs every week between the meetings. Thus, they create further reinforcement and holding for the PSTs, and could clarify

the place of the PSTs, both from the aspect of curricular knowledge and the aspect of their feelings.

These three spaces encompassed educational, psychodramatic, and psychological aspects, associated with teacher education process, and their constructive integration enabled an in-depth investigation, support, and knowledge consolidation. This was done by directing the PSTs to create compensating parts of the self that allowed coping with feelings of pain, disappointment, and frustration, common at this early stage of the training. This study showed that these processes assisted in developing the PSTs' sense of self-efficacy for teaching, increasing their empathy level, consolidating their professional identity, as well as in the transition from diffuse identity to a more uniform and designed identity.

The conclusions drawn from the three research questions focused on three axes that were indicated in the intervention program and served as an engine for developing the PSTs' professional identity:

1. My relationship with others – this allowed a multi-dimensional encounter with different parts of the self that were reflected out of the environment.
2. My relationship with the self – this enabled connecting and delving into the personal narratives, the roles, needs, wishes, difficulties. This entailed the building of thoughts and feelings with a view to the professional future as special education teachers.
3. My relationship with psychodrama – the practice enabled movement and contact between roles, feelings and emotions, past and present, as well as promotion of integration of parts and sub-identities.

As shown, the model presented in Figure No. V.1 is an integrative and interactive model, that integrates the fields of special education, and psychodrama. Moreover, the model is modular and can be changed and adapted to the environment and to the context in which it is applied.

## **IV.6 Practical Implications and Recommendations**

### ***IV.6.1 Recommendations for special education pedagogical supervisors***

In order to facilitate this interdisciplinary model, pedagogical supervisors should listen to the needs that arise from it and provide an appropriate and responding environment that optimally satisfies the emerging needs.

- One of the challenges which pedagogical supervisors face when they have to lead a program according to this model, is the sense of vagueness regarding the acquaintance with the emotional world. In order to assist in shaping the PSTs' professional identity, the pedagogical supervisors must be in contact with their own emotional world, while developing an awareness and acquaintance with processes of identity consolidation they have undergone by themselves. In this task, the pedagogical supervisor should embrace an emotional discourse, develop an emotional awareness, and effective capabilities as a response to the surroundings. These processes can assist the mediator, the pedagogical supervisor in the identification of situations and needs of the group participants and in choosing and providing an appropriate response to the participants' emotions and needs, and affect the process of their professional identity development.

#### ***IV.6.2 Recommendations for art therapists***

- The art therapist should develop their professional acquaintance with theoretical and practical knowledge for the group therapy and group instruction. In the work groups, the therapist should integrate creative tools that are adapted to the group goals and group developmental stages.

#### ***IV.6.3 Recommendations for principals***

- The principal should encourage the art therapist to take part in this program, and allocate resources, hours, working space, and materials.
- The principal, together with the school counsellor and the art therapist, should assist in setting up a heterogeneous group. Such group will comprise children with emotional ability that is suited for procedural work in a group. Moreover, when necessary, the principal should encourage undecided parents to approve their child's participation in the group, while shedding light on the numerous advantages of such a group.

#### ***IV.6.4 Recommendation for educational policy makers***

Training of principals: the training program for principals should emphasize the principals' role in the preservation of the ecological context of the school culture, while developing a sharing and authentic leadership oriented at an emotional discourse and focused on people. These will create a school climate of partnership and will assist the art therapist and the

pedagogical supervisor who take part in the program, as well as the school staff in understanding and designating pupils who are suitable to the program.

- Resources for the development the program and its implementation at school should be allocated specifically for each educational framework. All these might increase the satisfaction of the program participants, reduce their burnout level, and contribute to the development of the PSTs.

#### ***IV.6.5 Recommendations for special education teacher education institutions***

- Allocate resources for opening frameworks for the development of PSTs' professional identity by means of psychodrama at the training stage.
- Special education teacher education institutions should develop awareness of the PSTs' emotional world, and recruit a staff that is qualified in emotional work. Contents associated with emotional work should be assimilated in the PSTs' training processes and in teachers' professional development.

### **IV.7 Contribution to Knowledge**

#### ***IV.7.1 Contribution to theoretical knowledge***

The empirical literature concurs that the emotional dimension of special education teacher training is necessary in order to support teachers' professional development. However, this field is at its very beginning (Golan, 2018). An essential focus in the training process today is to mediate space for teachers as holistic people, while referring to their emotions and their self-as-a-teacher. The topics indicated as needed were: pre-service teachers' sense of the self, the place of personal biography, beliefs and life experience, as well as the time needed for challenging the self-understanding and looking at oneself in a different way (Golan, 2018; Crispel & Crispel, 2017).

This study bridges the gap in knowledge of this field by renovating, challenging, and expanding studies of professional identity consolidation of PSTs who are in their training process. This study focuses on three axes that serve as an engine for the development of professional identity: my relationship with the environment, my relationship with myself, and my relationship with psychodrama.

This study emphasizes the I-environment axis and the meaning of the group and of the interpersonal relationship in the development of professional identity. Thus, it expands the empirical literature, according to which these relationships are important for the development of professional identity (Day, 2017; Fisherman & Weiss, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Moreover, this study enriches the theoretical knowledge of enhancing acquaintance with the self and developing awareness in the axis “my relationship with myself” as a meaningful element in the development of professional identity (Du Plessis & Marais, 2013; Golan, 2018; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

The self-inquiry work is performed, among others, by a reflective process. It requires meta-cognitive processes and contributes to the theoretical knowledge about the importance of reflective work in teaching (Ran, 2016). This study reinforces the perception that conducting a discourse about the role of emotions in education is important as a way of expanding the role perception, professional identity, positions, perceptions, and skills required for being a teacher (Chan, 2004; Shapiro, 2009).

A major and meaningful tool in the inquiry of professional identity in this study relies on the axis “my relationship with psychodrama”. Since research in the field that integrates education and psychodramatic work is not yet prevalent in Israel and around the world, in spite of development that transpired in recent years, the importance attributed to the engagement in this field is increasingly growing. The relatively short history of psychodrama-integrated intervention programs in special education, allows proximity to the foundation and growth point of this field. Moreover, it allows extensive design of psychodrama-based programs that focus on the teacher-as-a-person in the training process.

The findings expand the empirical literature that considers role playing as a fertile soil for individuals so that they can be spontaneously uncovered and release introverted and unfamiliar parts (Berkhof et al., 2011). Moreover, the individuals facilitate the development of learning out of an experience, critical learning and problem solving (Cheung et al., 2009), the practice of newly-born parts and roles, development of creativity, self-awareness (Seyedi, 2020), and assistance in the flexible transition between various roles within the students’ self, as required at this developmental stage of the PSTs’ identity consolidation.

#### ***IV.7.2 Contribution to practical knowledge***

On the practical level, a model developed in this study served as guidelines for building frameworks for the development of professional identity of special education PSTs by means of psychodrama. This study exposed complex processes that transpired among the PSTs who participated in the psychodrama-based intervention program, given a space for emotional learning that focused on teachers as people and on their emotions during their induction into the educational field, the research environment and its various layers.

The processes that transpired in the investigated model shifted the PSTs from a feeling of loneliness that resulted from lack of sectorial belonging and vagueness related to knowing and understanding the role, towards a sense of belonging and beginning of a professional identity consolidation and thinking about the various roles of special education teachers. The components of the program assisted in emotional and content-oriented holding, development of introspection, as well as processing and development of an educational-emotional language.

This model contributed to the development of the professional identity not only of the PSTs who took part in the model but also of other PSTs in a way that improved and enriched the language, the established relationships, and the way of creating them so that they enabled a perceptual change in the educational institution.

### **IV.8 Further Studies**

As part of further studies, the impact of the intervention program should be investigated while considering the following recommendations:

- The research population should be larger, comprising several colleges and several schools from different districts.
- The study can be re-conducted with a population of teachers with an initial teaching seniority ranging between 0-5 years,
- At least one point of time should be added in order to assess the impact of the program in the long range.
- An investigation should be made about the effect of the intervention on the participation experience of the pedagogical supervisors with the addition of their point of view, as well as the participation experience of the pupils and the relationships with the PSTs from the pupils' point of view.

#### **IV. 9 Significance of this Study – Both Locally and Universally**

The contribution of this study is, first of all, in the improvement and development of an Israeli and global perspective of the field of special education teacher training. This perspective enhances the wide puzzle and the important project of expanding the emotional parts in the way special education teachers work at the stage of their training. Thus, a working manner which focuses on the teacher-as-person is consolidated, creating a place for their feelings, emotions, and thoughts, as well as acknowledging these meanings when working in such a sensitive field as special education.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes the need that emerged in recent years in the educational field, regarding the creation of a space for developing the PSTs' professional identity during the training process. This need attributes importance to the creation of a learning and experiencing space that originates in education. It encompasses a PST-supervisor-materials discourse, in which we can observe and explore the world of the children and the world of the PSTs, examining the relationship between the evoked feelings and the developing professional identity.

This study has at its center mediated learning under conditions of direct exposure to stimulus – the world of the child, the surroundings and the inner world of the PST, by means of psychodramatic techniques. It underscores coping options and suggests a guideline of directed discovery underpinning the concept that knowledge is built and discovered out of interaction with the environment. Thus, the model suggests a constructivist space, that on the one hand maintains tension between an open curriculum in which the PSTs discover the knowledge, and on the other hand, a closed curriculum, relying on frontal teaching that integrates delivery of knowledge and relevant theoretical materials. The objective is consolidating a sense of confidence in delving into complex contents that come up at the initial stage of the training. This is a crucial process for special education teachers and their professional future in every framework of special education teacher training program around the globe.

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