

THE THREAT TO EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING: TEACHER ATTITUDES TO THE PROMOTION PROGRAMME IN ISRAEL

BLOSSOM WIESEN

Abstract – *This study examines college teachers' attitudes in Israel in the light of the new Staff Promotion Programme(SPP). This Programme has been instituted to elevate the position of teachers by setting up criteria for promotion. Despite the expressed interest in elevating the status of teachers, this author contends that the Programme will undervalue teaching excellence. This article presents a review of pertinent research pertaining to excellence in teaching, assessment methods and teacher attitudes to rewarding research publications to the neglect of teaching excellence. Teachers interviewed and responding to a questionnaire responded similarly to research findings, indicating that teachers prefer to be evaluated according to their teaching, particularly in teacher training institutions. Moreover, many recommend the adoption of programmes for improving their teaching methods.*

Introduction

Israeli Teachers' Colleges have undergone radical changes during the last twenty years, moving from traditional teacher-training seminaries to academic degree (B.Ed.) granting institutions (Yakir, 1997). Part and parcel of granting academic degrees at the teachers' colleges involved upgrading of the teaching staff in the form of requiring higher degrees. Teachers who have not attained masters' degrees have been phased out and the emphasis on doctorates has increased (Yakir, 1997).

Motivated by a desire to improve the professional status of college teachers, the Ministries of Education, the Treasury and the two teachers' unions engaged in lengthy negotiations from 1994-1997. The resulting agreement established conditions for professional promotion in teachers' colleges. This 1997 Agreement is likely to have profound affects on teacher status and perceptions concerning excellence in teaching.

Prior to the agreement, college teachers' salaries in Israel were linked to the salary schedules of primary school and high school teachers although they were required to have a least a master's degree for employment. Unlike university teachers, they were not ranked with pay differentials or reduced teaching load.

Their primary function was teaching and striving for excellence in teaching. Many were involved in preparing curricula and learning materials. Research was only casually encouraged.

In order to determine criteria for advancement, a new ranking system was established. It adopted the ranking terminology of the university system while instituting specific criteria for the colleges (see Table 1). The aim of this study is to explore the attitudes of teachers' college teachers to both their function and activities, since the institution of the Staff Promotion Programme (SPP).

TABLE 1: Promotional Scale

Position	Excellence in Teaching	Initiatives	Curricular Development	Publications
Master Teacher	50%	20%	20%	10%
Lecturer	20%	40%	20%	20%
Master Lecture	20%	20%	40%	20%
Master Lecturer-A	20%	20%	20%	40%

Teachers' College positions are 'equivalent' to the following university positions:

- Master Teacher = Lecturer.
- Lecturer = Assistant Professor
- Senior Lecturer = Associate Professor
- Teachers' College Professor = Professor

The SPP outlines four steps for promotion with salary increments (see Table 1). Potential candidates, tenured teachers with an academic teaching load of 75% or more, present their portfolio containing pertinent data to the SPP committee for evaluation. Elected teacher representatives from each academic field (humanities, mathematics, science, education and pedagogy) serve on the committee together with appointed members of the college administration. The criteria for promotion are good teaching, professional initiatives, development of teaching materials and curricula and publications. In the evaluation of teacher portfolios, good teaching becomes a less significant criterion, decreasing from 50% to 20%, as teachers advance. Conversely, the importance placed on publications increases from 10% at the lowest level to 40% at the top of the scale (Ministry of Education, 1997).

In other words, the quantity and quality of their publications, rather than continued excellence in teaching, ultimately measure the teachers' professional growth.

It is the contention of this study that excellence in teaching should be the primary focus for the professional advancement in the teachers' colleges. It is entirely possible that rather than raising professional standards in the teachers' colleges, this agreement will inspire teachers to devote their energies to publishing to the possible detriment of teaching. Finally, it may have ramifications in lowering the morale of teachers who believe that teaching should have primary importance in teachers' colleges.

It is the aim of this paper to provide a review of the professional literature relating to institutions which are attempting to alter the focus of promotions in higher education with a view to reaffirming the primacy of teaching. The means of evaluating teaching is also briefly discussed. In addition, teachers at teachers' colleges were interviewed to determine their attitudes concerning the Agreement and the importance of teaching.

Attitudes to teaching

As movements in Western countries, including Australia, attempt to give teaching the same or similar importance rendered to research, Israeli teachers' colleges appear to be moving in exactly the opposite direction, rewarding research to the possible detriment of teaching.

Professional development studies indicate changing attitudes and practices throughout the western world relating to teaching and research. Critics of higher education have pointed at the lowering of prestige accorded to teaching as the reason to reassess the balance between teaching and research (Ross and Barfield, 1995).

The quality of teaching on the higher education level has suffered a barrage of criticisms maintaining that teaching has suffered while publishing is rewarded (Daly, 1994; Sykes, 1988). These criticisms have provided the impetus for evaluating and improving the quality of higher education teaching in Australia (Crebbin, 1997). Clearly, terms such as 'quality' and 'teaching' are not easily defined. Chubb (1992) indicates that while 'there is no single standard of a 'good teacher' there are characteristics of effective teaching'. He indicates that teaching entails clear objectives in consonance with assessment procedures, and well-organised presentations accompanied by positive interactions between teachers and students. Candy *et al.* (1994) concentrate on specific teaching strategies including 'self-directed and experiential learning' with an emphasis on student learning styles and life-long learning. These researchers emphasised additional characteristics exemplified by the good teacher such as modeling, reflectiveness, self-evaluation,

and the quality of the learning environment and teacher accountability. Faculty surveyed in the US agree that teaching also includes course preparation, assessment of student work, supervision of graduate student research, advising and the professional development related to these (Edgerton, 1993). As might be expected, methods of evaluating teaching quality and the need to relate teaching to product, namely learning, are still being debated (Crebbin, 1997).

Teaching at the apex of education

Researchers have traditionally placed teaching at the center of higher education. Yet, teaching seems to have lost considerable prestige in Anglo-Saxon countries as the teaching staff together with institutional management strives for the prestige afforded by research grants and publication (Ramsden and Martin 1996). Moreover, studies in the US, the United Kingdom, Australia and elsewhere indicate that instructors believe the universities undervalue good teaching (Sykes, 1988; McCaughey, 1993; McCaffery, 1997; Schratz, 1992). Schratz states that classroom teachers in Austria would like to see teaching being given 'the same status as is usually given a research interest' (1992: 3).

Surveys have queried the issue of the balance between teaching and research of faculty. Department chairs and deans of universities across the US, for instance, revealed the need for reassessment in this area. In 1991, Stanford University President Donald Kennedy called for changes in the faculty reward system including:

- (1) ending quantitative standards for measuring research productivity in order to cap 'the over-production of routine scholarship';
- (2) broadening the definition of scholarship to include creative work beyond that reported in peer-reviewed journals;
- (3) peer review of teaching effectiveness;
- (4) more flexible approaches to faculty careers (see Edgerton, 1993).

A special report entitled *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professorate* by Ernest Boyer presented teaching and service to the university as expressions of their scholarly work (Edgerton, 1993). Similarly, the Teaching Improvement Programme (TIP) at the University of Florida has provided substantial pay increments since 1993, in order to reward and improve undergraduate teaching productivity and quality (Ross and Barfield, 1995). Following the initial stage, TIP developed guidelines for teacher portfolios so that teaching would be rewarded on its own and 'divorced from research performance'

(Ross and Barfield, 1995). In England, the Dearing Report on higher education recommended that the same criteria be applied to university teaching as are for research and that professorships should be awarded for excellence in teaching (McCaffery, 1997).

In an attempt to restore teaching to its traditional role at the apex of education at all levels, the Australian Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching has allocated funds for innovative teaching projects (Ramsden and Martin, 1996). These projects concentrate on recognising, assessing and rewarding good teaching with an emphasis on the 'the importance of linking quality management strategies to processes for recognising teaching' (Ramsden and Martin, 1996). Ramsden and Martin surveyed current practices at universities to discover how good teaching was recognised. Practices such as teaching awards, training for inexperienced teachers, mentoring and leadership development exist, though the extent to which they are used varied in the 32 universities responding to the survey. Instructors indicated that teaching and research ought to be valued in the tenure and promotion process.

Student assessment questionnaires

Many institutions of higher learning rely upon student assessment questionnaires for the purpose of evaluating teacher performance. Current research seems to indicate that student evaluations of teaching effectiveness have been the most consistently valid tool for assessment available (Marsh and Dunkin, 1992; McKeachie, 1990; Ramsden, 1991; Seldin, 1993).

A number of questions present themselves as to the intent of student evaluations. Are student evaluations an effective means of determining student learning? Or, are they to be used for teacher improvement? If so, how can they be used for teacher improvement? Are student evaluations intended to be used for determining tenure and advancement of faculty? If so, how do faculty members relate to student evaluations used for these purposes?

Researchers are divided as to the correlation between student learning and teacher effectiveness. McKeachie (1990) and Murray and Holmes (1997) maintain that a positive correlation exists between those instructors who were positively evaluated by students and student learning. If there is a correlation between student learning and positive evaluations, is there then an optimal time for evaluating teacher performance? It would seem that if student evaluations are used to encourage teacher improvement, then timing of the evaluations ought to be significant. Seldin (1993) states that assessment should be administered within six weeks after the course begins. Other researchers indicate that feedback that

attends to student needs and teacher improvement should be administered several times during the course (Mace, 1997). This would seem logical if teachers are attentive to student feedback and wish to make improvements in their teaching.

Investigators have related to innumerable variables and to what extent they determine student evaluations: whether the course is an elective (McKeachie, 1979; Scherr and Scheft, 1990), class meeting time (Aleamoni, 1987; Centra, 1993), level of the course (Marsh, 1987), class size (McKeachie, 1990), subject area (Ramsden, 1991; Cashin, 1990) and instructor's reputation. Other factors which affect students' evaluations are leniency and student expectations of the course and the instructor (Wachtel, 1998). Moreover, Wachtel notes that students' emotional state at the end of the course, at the time that many institutions distribute feedback evaluations, often contributes to poorer assessments of their instructors (1998).

Other writers question their validity, especially as determinants of tenure and promotion (Rutland, 1990; Koblitz, 1990; Zoller, 1992). Moreover Wachtel (1998) presents a number of studies which indicate faculty opposition to the use of student evaluations. These range from improper use of evaluations (Franklin and Theall, 1989), to undermining faculty morale. If the faculty questions the validity of student feedback, the possibility of this tool being used for teacher improvement would be negated. In addition, some investigators have indicated that mandatory ratings may contribute to inflation of grades (Ryan, Anderson, and Birchler, 1980).

While other researchers accept student evaluations as part of the criteria for rating the clarity of teaching, they cite peer review as also significant. Only fellow professionals can determine whether the course delivery is suitable to the level of the class. Edgerton (1993) suggests the use of teaching portfolios as the means of displaying unique approaches to teaching rather than as yet another bureaucratic requirement.

It has been suggested that a combination of peer review with student evaluations can present additional aids in evaluating and improving teaching. The Small Groups Instructional Diagnosis (SGID: see Bennett, 1987; Diamond, 1988) enlists the aid of a colleague who guides small groups of students in meaningful feedback sessions. Heppner and Johnston (1994) adapted a peer consultation programme (Tiberius and Janzen, 1990) at the University of Missouri-Columbia for improving teaching but not for evaluating teaching for promotional purposes. In this programme, aims are carefully defined to both students and faculty. Faculty members wishing to participate work in pairs. Feedback is conducted in small groups or with the entire class by the agreed upon faculty consultant. Attention is given to both the feedback process as well as the results. The process is reversed whereby the observing faculty member is observed by the partner. Instructors

preferred this peer review since feedback concentrated on specific means of improving their teaching. Planned changes in teaching were discussed with students. Moreover, faculty morale improved because teachers felt empowered to make changes which would improve teaching (Heppner and Johnson, 1994).

Programmes for teacher development

Staff development programmes exist throughout the Western world in various forms. Murray and Holmes (1997) describe a programme developed in Great Britain for university lecturers which emphasises developing 'professional skills (such as teaching, research and administration), developing skills related to teaching (curriculum development, assessment, etc.) and subject-specialist updating'. Teaching and technical skills are improved through a partnership or mentoring programme. This mentoring programme creates an atmosphere of collaboration between senior and junior staff.

The Department of Psychology and Educational Studies at Purdue University offers a doctoral level course for training college teachers. Coming from a wide range of disciplines, potential college teachers study and discuss course and teaching goals, student motivation, learning theories and applications. They are instructed in interactive lecturing techniques, curriculum and syllabi development, peer teaching, group work, integration of computers and teaching aids, testing, grading and student ratings of teaching. Reviewing video clips of teachers for evaluation, noting both strengths and weaknesses, encourages modelling of good teaching performance. In the final stages of the course additional assessment and evaluation techniques are followed (Feldhusen, Ball, Derek, *et al.*, 1998).

The Australian Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching established a programme for teacher improvement and recognition. The programme included interviewing staff to determine attitudes and needs. A number of recommendations for improvement were made: peer review of teaching, portfolio assessment, developing skills for 'making valid judgements of performance,' self-evaluation, student evaluations, opportunities for improving and training for teaching and making teaching qualifications equivalent to research qualifications. Ramsden and Martin conclude with the suggestion that university teaching should be considered a profession (1996).

Schratz (1992) proposes a programme for teacher improvement, based on reflectiveness, learning theories and action research. Instructors were encouraged to research their own teaching practice through self-reflection on learning processes and collective sharing of ideas. He suggests an instant feedback technique whereby students are asked to respond to two questions: (1) 'What is the

most significant thing you learned today?’ and (2) ‘What question is uppermost in your mind at the end of this class session?’ (Wilson, 1986 in Schratz). This helps the instructor focus on whether the students understood and learned during the lecture as well as providing the opportunity for clarification during future lectures. Moreover, Schratz proposes open-ended questionnaires and a personal letter from the instructor requesting feedback, as preferable to the traditional multiple choice questions. Other ideas for reflective teaching are journals, mutual classroom observations, and VCR recordings of lessons and interview triangles (Schratz, 1992).

Murray (1998) describes staff development programmes at New York State 2-year colleges as ‘a smorgasbord of activities rather than a unified plan with clear coherent strategies based on articulated objectives.’ He quoted five components for effective faculty development:

- ‘the existence of a formalized, structured development programme and activities;
- connecting faculty development to the reward structure;
- faculty ownership;
- colleague support for investments in teaching;
- a belief that good teaching is valued by administrators.’

(McKeachie, 1985; Kort, 1992; Stark *et al.*, 1988).

However, Murray concludes that other than the lip service paid by administrators to the cause of good teaching, consistency in applying these the five criteria for teacher development are lacking at present at the 2-year colleges in New York state.

Furthermore, in the Carnegie Foundation 1989 national survey, faculty from each sector of higher education were asked whether ‘their interests lie primarily in research or in teaching.’ The community college faculty answered resoundingly ‘teaching,’ and when asked, ‘should teaching effectiveness be the primary criterion for promotion of faculty?’ they were nearly unanimous in their agreement. Incidentally, the survey found the commitment to teaching as the primary criterion for promotion has declined over the past 20 years for all faculties from 78 percent in 1969 to 62 percent in 1989 (Carnegie Foundation, 1990).

The context of this study

Unlike university instructors, teachers at Israeli teachers’ colleges generally have teaching certificates which they attained either while teaching at the colleges or as result of prior experience at the primary or secondary school level. Therefore,

they have been trained on both the theoretical and methodological levels. In addition, Israeli teachers' colleges have provided opportunities for staff development on two planes, on the institutional and national levels. Within particular colleges professional improvement programmes generally exist on both the departmental and institutional level. Departmental meetings are devoted to study and sharing sessions, curricula and learning strategies' discussions. In some departments informal mentoring also exists. On the institutional level, colleges provide in-service training for staff in areas such as computer and Internet skills, learning difficulties and course enrichment.

On the national level, *Mofet* is an intercollegiate professional training, support and advocacy institute for teacher education supported by the Department of Teacher Education of the Ministry of Education. *Mofet* offers a rich series of programmes for teacher development, international conferences, publications, innovative courses and programmes, coordinators, discussion groups, think tanks and special events. These programmes include both on-going courses as well as study days in all disciplines relating to teacher training, and excellence. Programmes are offered throughout the academic year and during vacations. These programmes permit invaluable intercollegiate contact for all educational streams within the country.

Although formal staff development programmes as those noted above do not appear to be prevalent in teachers colleges, programmes with similar objectives could be promoted should excellence in teaching remain the primary objective of these institutions. This would require reassessment of the current SPP agreement.

In the light of this apparent emphasis on teacher development both institutionally and nationally, the current agreement for teacher advancement and promotion appears to be contrary to both of the spirit or the intent of these objectives.

Method

In order to investigate the probability that teacher attitudes would be affected by the introduction of the Staff Promotional Programme – which emphasises research rather than teaching at the higher promotional levels – I devised a ten-item questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to all faculty members of one of the largest colleges in Israel in order to serve as a case study. In addition, questionnaires were distributed to a sample of faculty members of six large, well-established institutions and two smaller colleges. All faculty members involved in the study teach at degree granting colleges. Many personally meet the criteria for professional advancement in accordance with the SPP.

TABLE 2: *Excellence in Teaching Defined*

1. A genuine love and affection for your students combined with life-long learning.
2. Creativity in teaching, developing new areas of knowledge, collaborative learning with students, personal modeling example.
3. Mastery of the syllabus and the ability to emphasise the most important issues. Professional use of learning and teaching strategies and suiting them to the student population. Being up-to-date on content and context. Sensitivity to student needs.
4. In depth knowledge, a broad educational perspective, educational values, positive relationships with students, practical teaching experience and on-going connection with the field.
5. The ability to transmit learning material in an interesting and enjoyable fashion, which is applicable for students professionally.
6. Developing professional judgment among students.
7. An interdisciplinary approach, communicative skills, constant professional development, social involvement in the college and community, helpfulness toward new teachers, personal model, reflectiveness, tolerance, critical thinking and teacher-researcher.
8. Expertise in his field of teaching, ability to adapt teaching materials to his student population, didactic ability, sensitivity to student needs.
9. It is a composite of many factors but most important is creating a thirst for knowledge and motivating students to develop their skills and proficiencies to become autonomous learners.
10. Being innovative, interesting and enthusiastic.
11. Imparting the subject matter so those students really learn and become excellent teachers themselves.
12. Excellence in teaching is indefinable.
13. Knowledge and experience.
14. A pyramid with morality, ability and talent, consistent on-going learning.
15. The relationship between the ideal values discussed in class and their application and modeling.
16. Clarity carefully planned teaching which arouses reflection and understanding in a comfortable learning atmosphere.
17. I see myself as a facilitator of learning and not merely as the fount of information.
18. Students implementing theory express teaching excellence and values with clarity, via up-to-date content material measure quality teaching in the field.

The questionnaire examined teacher attitudes pertaining to excellence in teaching. The questionnaire asked teachers to define good teaching. A sampling of their responses is recorded in Table 2. Teachers were asked whether they believed that the promotional programme encouraged teaching excellence (see Table 3), whether they saw a connection between teaching performance and publication, and how teaching should be evaluated (Tables 4 and 5). Within the six questions that required a *yes/no* answer, teachers were asked to explain their responses. These responses revealed the in-depth reactions of the faculty. In addition, a sampling of teachers from eight other teachers' colleges were interviewed as to their reactions to the new promotional scheme.

TABLE 3: Percentage Results*

	Yes	No	Undecided
The teacher advancement programme encourages excellence in teaching	41.6	46.6	11.8
Academic publication and excellence in teaching are related	20.0	75.0	3.3
Teaching and research are of equal importance.	36.6	56.6	5.0
Teaching should be evaluated by college administrators' observations.	30.0	70.0	0.0
Subject chairperson should evaluate teaching.	55.0	33.3	11.0
Teaching should be evaluated by student evaluations.	83.3	10.0	6.8
Teaching should be evaluated by peer observations.	65.0	33.3	1.7
Teaching should be evaluated by self-evaluation.	65.0	23.3	11.7
Student learning and student feedback are connected	56.6	21.6	21.6
There is a need to improve the quality of teaching at the college level	71.6	0.0	29.4

*Figures are rounded and may not add up to 100%.

TABLE 4: Administering Student Feedback *

	Per cent Results
One month after the beginning of the semester	0.5
Once a month	0.3
At mid-semester	20.0
Just before the final exam	10.0
At the end of the semester	35.0
At mid-semester and at the end of the semester	35.0
No response	00.0

*Figures are rounded and may not add up to 100%.

TABLE 5: Student feedback questions could be used to: *

	Yes	No	Sometimes	No Response
Improve the quality of teaching	80.0	6.0	8.3	3.3
Determine teacher tenure	60.0	33.3	0.0	5.0
Determine teacher promotion	56.6	28.3	10.0	3.0

*Figures are rounded and may not add up to 100%.

200 questionnaires were distributed to faculty members at one teachers' college. 60 responses were received, indicating a 30% response. Twenty teachers from that same college were interviewed as to their reactions to the promotion programme. Forty-eight teachers (80%) indicated that they were acquainted with the programme; whereas eleven teachers (18.3%) were unacquainted with the programme.

Since most teachers' colleges currently use student questionnaires for evaluating teacher performance, this study examines teacher attitudes to the questionnaires and their use for promotion purposes (Tables 4 and 5).

The following are some teacher reactions to student questionnaires:

- 'Basing teacher evaluations on student ratings exclusively were disappointing. When high demands were made of students as compared with teachers who are less demanding of student performance, the evaluations by students were negatively affected.'
- 'I'm sure teachers will be observed by supervisors if their student ratings were poor.'
- 'Teachers who are lenient graders are more apt to get positive feedback from students irrespective of their teaching abilities.'
- 'Student evaluations should be given at the middle of each semester so I can improve my teaching, rather than at end of the year for the purpose of promotion and tenure.'

Discussion

Since the Staff Promotional Programme (SPP) is currently entering its third year, it was considered significant by this researcher to explore teacher attitudes. Feedback from the short questionnaires distributed to the faculty suggest a broad humanistic definition of teaching excellence including theoretical and practical

applications as well as sensitivity to student needs. Although teachers are divided with regards to whether the SPP will contribute to teaching excellence, many appear to indicate a 'wait and see' attitude in that the programme has only just been instituted. Others have strong reservations about the atmosphere generated by competition among teachers. Moreover, the eligibility requirements (academic teachers teaching a 75% teaching load) eliminate whole categories of potential teacher candidates with smaller teaching loads from the promotion exercise.

More than 75% of teachers believe that teaching and publication skill are unrelated. Moreover, only 36.6 % indicated that teaching and research are of equal importance at teachers' training institutions. Thus, significant numbers of teachers believe that teaching should continue to be the focus of teachers' colleges rather than academic publication. Several indicated that although academic research is more prestigious, teaching and practical contact with the field is more important in teachers' colleges.

With respect to the question of who should evaluate teaching, 70% opposed evaluation by supervisory administrators. A number stated that administrators would probably not be aware of the subject matter involved and possibly might not be skilled pedagogical observers. Several indicated a single observation would rarely indicate the teacher's ability, programme of study, or interpersonal relations with the students. Teachers believe (55%) that the subject chairperson is a more likely candidate for observing and relating to a teacher's lesson. However, many qualified their response with 'that depends if the lesson is later discussed in depth and followed by additional observations with the aim of improving, rather than judging teaching.' Student evaluations were overwhelmingly cited (83.3%), as one of the categories for evaluating teaching. This relates directly to the question which queried the connection between student feedback and student learning. 56.6 % believe that there is a definite connection between the two. Self-evaluation and peer-evaluation were other areas of evaluation considered favourably. A number of teachers (20%) suggested a combination of all sources of evaluation.

On the issue of whether student evaluations could be used to improve teaching quality, nearly 80% believe it could. 60% believe student evaluations could be used to determine teacher tenure. 56.6 % believe student evaluations could be used as part of the criteria for determining teacher promotions.

More than 71% of teachers responding to the questionnaire believe teaching should be improved at the teachers' colleges. Many suggested teacher improvement programmes, study days, workshops, conferences, peer consultations and so forth.

Those teachers who have already received promotions indicated that they were disappointed in that excellence in teaching was suddenly undervalued for

higher level promotions at the very institutions which are focused on teacher training. Teachers suggested changing the percentages devoted to teaching and publications at the higher levels.

Some teachers indicated dissatisfaction with student evaluations as a criterion for assessing teaching. They indicated that if the student feedback questionnaires are to be used for teacher improvement and not only for promotional purposes, forms should be distributed at mid-semester.

Teachers at two colleges indicated that the use of student questionnaires had been discontinued due to opposition expressed by teachers who were unfavourably evaluated. In addition, these colleges found that teachers were lowering their standards in order to curry favour with students and receive high ratings.

Those teachers who had applied for promotion and were left empty handed stated that a number of the criteria were incorrectly evaluated. Although they were asked to indicate professional initiatives, creativity, volunteer work and materials preparations, these were ignored in favour of publications. A number of teachers stated that if the process continues in this direction, the teachers' colleges would lose the unique qualities which have attracted both students and faculty to their hallowed halls.

Those teachers interviewed expressed strong feelings as to how the SPP would affect them professionally as well as the overall effects on teacher training institutions. Some of their reactions are recorded here:

- 'Prior to the adoption of the promotion system, teachers worked together. Now, there isn't a good feeling. We felt that our job entailed contributing to the individual growth of the students. We didn't feel that this required professional rewards. Now, there is a sense of 'publish or perish' among faculty rather than striving for good teaching.'
- 'My professional emphasis has always been on teaching, experiential learning and curricular development which is down-played by the current promotion scheme.'
- 'Teachers who devoted themselves to publishing are being considered for higher ranks whereas those who continue to view teaching as their primary function were not rewarded with advancement.'
- 'Generally, tenured teachers are not observed by the department coordinator. However, if the coordinator or a member of the administration does observe a lesson, I wonder if they have the skills to determine good teaching.'
- 'If the supervisory staff observes a teacher's lesson, it is usually because a student complained, otherwise observation is not part of the routine.'

- ‘I’m interested in improving my teaching and relationship with the students rather than publishing papers which are of little significance in the educational process.’
- ‘We have always aimed at humanistic educational values. These are taking a back seat to publications in the new promotion programme.’
- ‘The whole idea of promotion is good. It is an attempt to give us the status similar to university instructors. It is especially good for people who have been publishing all along.’
- ‘If the main emphasis of the promotion programme is publications in professional journals, then it cannot encourage excellence in teaching. Then it is similar to the universities which do not stress teaching.’
- ‘Promotions will only serve to divide the faculty and create jealousy and dissention. It suddenly creates anxiety among teachers concerning their teaching ability. Added to that, student evaluations become a popularity contest.’
- ‘Some people have been given promotions because of their publications even though their teaching is reputed to be poor. How can you explain this in a teacher training institution?’
- ‘I would like to see greater stress on teaching excellence than on publications. Also I feel that student evaluations can be easily manipulative and manipulated.’
- ‘The Promotional Programme is based on criteria which do not stress the importance of teaching at the higher promotional levels. Instead of teaching, the teachers’ energies will be devoted to publishing and gaining administrative positions.’
- ‘I see a direct connection between teaching excellence and promotion. The teacher who has not been promoted will seek to improve his teaching.’
- ‘Teachers who are deserving of promotion should get promoted without considering the percentage allowed by each category. It depletes teacher morale’
- ‘The Programme compensates teachers for academic constancy, involvement in education, scholarship and their contribution to the college.’

Among those teachers interviewed and responding to the questionnaire, teaching remains their professional focus. Many indicated that research skills and teaching excellence do not necessarily go hand in hand. They stated that a teacher could be an excellent researcher but lack the qualities which make for a fine teacher. They stressed the overriding importance of modelling good teaching, reflectiveness and contact with the practical aspects of work in the field for all teachers at teacher training institutions.

Conclusions

Teachers' colleges have traditionally emphasised teacher training and excellence in teaching as their *raison d'être*. Modeling teaching methods and strategies, combined with the application of cognitive theories, psychological knowledge and insight as well as sensitivity to the student body, have been the by-words of the teachers' colleges. By instituting the Staff Promotion Programme as a means of up-grading the status of college teachers, the question which must be asked is whether the Programme will achieve the desired objectives.

The Staff Promotion Programme rewards college teachers with academic recognition and salary increments based on established criteria. However, as teachers move up the promotion scale, the value placed on teaching is displaced by the value placed on publications (see Table 1). Consequently, the changes, which are being instituted in the Israeli teachers' colleges as result of the SPP, can be seen as a setback for excellence in teaching. Teachers interviewed indicated their dissatisfaction with the percentage distribution on the promotion scale. Those responding to the questionnaire further reinforced these feelings. Most indicated that teaching was the prime focus of their careers. They generally indicated a strong desire to improve their teaching and would support programmes to meet this objective.

The relative merits of excellence in teaching and research need not be placed in opposition to one another. Teachers indicated that although they value research within the framework of the teachers' college system, it should concentrate on action research and reflectiveness. In this way, it would best serve the aims and objectives of teacher training institutions. Teachers stated that under no circumstances should research be given precedence over excellence in teaching. In addition, teaching improvement was considered of great importance.

Formal staff development programmes as those noted in the research literature reviewed above are not prevalent within the teachers colleges. The existing *Mofet* programme supported by the Board of Education provides an operational format for staff development. Teachers indicated that they would favour programmes for teacher improvement which might be expanded on the local college level. Within the colleges, teacher improvement programmes would be more accessible to faculty members. Teachers suggested study days, modelling, workshops, courses, lectures, discussions and in the field teaching methodology. These would justify the relationship between the teachers' colleges and the field of teaching. All teachers emphasised that students would reach their maximal potential only if exposed to excellent teaching.

A combination of student evaluations and peer reviews or a mentoring approach similar to that suggested by the Heppner and Johnson programme would permit a voluntary individualised approach to teacher improvement. With the

adoption of a realistic programme for teacher improvement, teachers could decide if they wished to submit these evaluations together with their portfolios for promotion review. On the other hand, if they felt they wished to submit evaluations at a later point, after having introduced changes in their teaching, it would be the teacher's choice. This would benefit their students and themselves professionally. Otherwise, evaluations function as a means of judging teaching without the possibility of improving teaching performance.

Teacher improvement programmes should avail teachers of the technological skills needed to meet the educational needs of the twenty-first century student. Thus, teachers need to be versed in learning from the theoretical and operational perspectives, methodology and strategies, as well as technological and computer literacy. Surely, carefully developed teacher improvement programmes, which empower faculty members in a partnership with the college administration, would be helpful in realising these objectives.

As result of the Staff Promotion Programme in Israeli Teachers' Colleges, discussions for evaluating teaching and teacher portfolios have been initiated. As the emphasis for promotion on the upper levels of the promotion scale indicate, teaching is less significant than research. This paper has supported the contentions of other researchers that teaching and service initiatives should be the overriding focus at teachers' colleges as the apex of education. Moreover, teachers surveyed indicated that they support continued emphasis on teaching and teaching-related activities such as curriculum and creative syllabus development.

Blossom Wiesen teaches at the Teachers' College of the Kibbutz Movement. Her contact address is 12 Zerubavel Street, Haifa 34671, Israel. Email: blossom@mofet.macam98.ac.il

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