

MODES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE “OFEK HADASH” (NEW HORIZON) REFORM AMONG PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AND THEIR ATTITUDES TO CHANGE

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Background: The “Ofek Hadash” (New Horizon) agreement was signed between the Israeli government and the Teachers’ Union representing all teachers in state and state religious elementary schools in Israel. The aims of the reform were: to narrow gaps in education, improve pupils’ achievements, promote and nurture children with difficulties as well as outstanding pupils, provide fair recompense to teachers, strengthen teachers’ status in society and provide quality time for each pupil.

As with any opportunity to promote the profession, this reform program may also elicit opposition among teachers because of the significant changes it makes in their work routine. Resistance to change in organizations is a familiar and well-known phenomenon attributable to the fears individuals experience with the transition from a known situation to an unfamiliar one, and a reluctance to deal with the concomitant changes that the new situation imposes on them.

The extent to which the reform has been implemented has never been examined in Physical Education nor has any study examined the extent of preparation teachers received to counter or neutralize possible opposition.

Research aims: 1) To clarify the ways in which Ofek Hadash was implemented among elementary and junior high school Physical Education teachers; 2) to examine the attitudes of Physical Education teachers to the Ofek Hadash reform; and 3) to examine the teachers’ attitudes to the change entailed in the implementation the reform.

Method: Participants were 190 Physical Education teachers from elementary and junior high schools in which the Ofek Hadash reform was introduced. A questionnaire was used to elicit information from the teachers about the ways in which the reform was implemented in Physical Education lessons in their school, the extent of preparation teachers in the school received, and teachers’ attitude to the change.

Results indicated that most of the teachers were in favor of the change and recognized its necessity. One of the main good changes teachers noted was an improvement in their ability to communicate with pupils. The teachers noted that the work load imposed on them is greater and that they spend longer hours in school than in the past. In addition, some of the participants noted that the promotions they received with the transition to the new program did not correspond to their professional skills.

Application of findings: Teacher educators can make use of the research findings as they prepare preservice Physical Education teachers for the new tasks they will encounter in their student teaching and later when they take their place as Physical Education teachers in the education system.