

**Alternative teacher education routes: From
'trained teacher' to teacher educated as a
'change agent'**

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Abstract

The present study explores the specific outlines and implementation characteristics of teacher training programs for teaching as a second career. These programs stand out for being socio-educational, aiming to foster leadership and generate a social value-based change through education. The study is based on a qualitative approach using case study methodology, and draws upon staff's interviews, meeting protocols, programmes' documents, and course syllabi. The findings reveal how these programs' content, structure, guiding principles, mode of operation, and the professional community of the staff collectively contribute to equipping teachers with the skills and mindset necessary for their socio-educational mission. The article presents a transition from a traditional worldview emphasising content-teaching skills to a holistic one where the teacher is a change leader. The study may offer a path for the designers of teacher education programs who wish their programs to lead to socio-educational change.

Keywords

Alternative teacher training program; Socio-educational change; Educational leadership; Teaching as a second career; professional learning community; field experience

Introduction

The global shortage in teachers has prompted increasing numbers of alternative teacher training programs alongside the traditional ones (Feiman-Nemser, 2017). The new programs feature exclusive and dedicated programs designed for different purposes such as advancing scientific-mathematical education, local-context-based education, education aspiring for equality and gap reduction, and driving a socio-educational change. Programs designed to promote social change must first investigate whether it is possible to train teachers as change agents and, if so, how this can be achieved (Apple, 2012). These questions guided us in exploring the characteristics of programs that stand out for being socio-educational, aiming to foster leadership and generate a social value-based change through education. In our research we studied the characteristics of two such programs from the perspective of their heads, who are also the authors of this article, and their academic staff. Both programs have the purpose of encouraging educational leadership towards driving social change, in collaboration with the bodies for which they were designed, Hotam (Teach First Israel), and the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality. Both programs comprise on-the-job-training elements. Their design is adjusted to their participants' profile, their activity context, and the vision and approach of the partners for whom they were designed.

The challenge: Generating social change through teacher training

Programs that have social goals aim to train teachers to be entrepreneurs, activists, and socio-educational leaders on top of having good teaching skills (Hokka, et al., 2017). The observation prism of those programs is, therefore, comprehensive. They aim, accordingly, at teaching based on a holistic perception of the cognitive, emotional, and value-oriented facets of the students (Mahmoudi et al., 2012; Miller, 2000). Apple, (interviewed by Meshulam, 2013), explains that schools are currently acting in two contradicting ways: they keep reproducing the existing social structures while at the same time challenging them. A

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similar contradiction is also noticed in alternative training programs that aspire to educate for social activity and change driving while at the same time also advocating optimal integration into an existing system that features elements of reproduction and preservation. The aspect of advancing social values through teachers' training regards the tension between focusing on disciplinary teaching and socio-educational issues relevant to every teacher as an educator. One preservation mechanism is organising the school around the studied disciplines, thus shaping the taught content, and even determining the learning and teaching modes. Knowledge-oriented teaching divided into hours and days of 45-minute sessions suits a pedagogical knowledge transfer approach (Carmon, 2010). In a system structured to accommodate different disciplines both in teachers' training and at school, new teachers feel their training should mainly cover disciplinary teaching, classroom management, and creating healthy communication with students and parents (KOÇ, 2019). Thus, they have difficulty engaging with values and activities promoting a socio-educational change, the main motive of most second-career teachers (Powers, 2002). An approach that advocates learning through knowledge structuring, social interaction, and assuming responsibility for learning by choice and interest requires a new structure and more flexible time divisions (Glassner and Back, 2020).

Another characteristic challenge of teacher education programs, particularly on-the-job ones, is spanning the gap between theory and practice (Clandinin and Husu, 2017; Jones et al., 2016; Kimmelman and Lang, 2019; Resch et al., 2022; Zeichner, 2017). The teaching profession requires theoretical knowledge and practical skills, a combination that is crucial throughout the training period. A theoretical basis is required to complete teacher education, in addition to practical experience (Consuegra et al., 2014). At the same time, field-based training in close collaboration with the schools has produced proactive teachers with high self-efficacy (Darling-Hammonds and Hyler, 2020). Therefore, teacher education programs comprising a central on-the-job training must balance addressing immediate classroom challenges with understanding the relevant theory supporting the practice and ongoing discourse on vision and mission.

Given the challenges involved in making socio-educational changes, the power of alternative programs that include extensive collaboration with the practical arena lies in their being context-specific. Context becomes content for learning and work. Socio-educational programs emphasise social, cultural, and geographic aspects, with the local context (Hammerness and Matsko, 2013; Hammerness and Craig, 2016; Matsko and Hammerness, 2014).

Apple maintains that changing the face of society through education requires considerable joint efforts of people working in collaboration (Apple, 2012). A community of practice allows contending with personal and group challenges and enhances the commitment to their goal (Wenger and Trayner, 2012). Group and contextual learning are both found to be a critical aspect in order to achieve comprehensive change processes on both local and broader levels (Fullan, 2006; 2008) points out that. Learning in a community of practice allows cultivating a capacity for change made of vision, skills, expertise, and commitment. Therefore, in change-driving learning and practising communities with a vision, the professional identity of both learners and teachers is reshaped (Shani et al., 2017).

The Context

The researchers are the academic leaders of two alternative teacher training programs currently underway at a teacher education college. The programs stand out for being socio-educational, aiming to foster leadership and generate a social value-based change through education. Their dedicated design corresponds to the participants' profile, their teaching context, and the vision and worldview of the partners (Hotam – Teach First Israel and the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality). The activity context has been studied thoroughly to determine the rationale, goals, organising elements, and action principles of the two

programs.

Hotam's (Teach First Israel) is part of the worldwide network Teach for All. Its vision is generating change and promoting equal opportunities in education in the social and geographic periphery to allow every child – from any background – to decide their future. Hotam's teacher education program targets idealistic academics with a sense of mission, who consider education an opportunity to narrow gaps and advance the periphery. Hotam spots and enlists those academics and puts them through a thorough selection process. They represent a diverse group of teachers in the form of religious and nonreligious, Jews and Arabs, from various regions across the country.

The Tel Aviv-Jaffa program is the first municipal educational program in Israel, inspired by urban education programs around the world (Chicago, Boston) responding to the educational needs and challenges of the city. The program's socio-educational foci lean on the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Education Department approach: groundbreaking education, integrated technology, autonomy, values, and democratic discourse. It targets academics residing in and around the city who wish to integrate into its education system. The program's participants teach all populations in Tel Aviv-Jaffa schools including Jews, Arabs and refugee children.

The academic staff of the two programs was selected to best suit their purposes. Its members are all intimately acquainted with the education field and personally have a socio-educational approach. The academic staff members interviewed for this research also teach in traditional teacher education programs, allowing them to compare the alternative programs with the traditional ones.

Research design and data sources

Research purpose: Examining the specific outlines and implementation characteristics of two alternative teacher training programs designed to generate socio-educational change from the perspective of the academic staff and the programs' academic heads. The study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing the case study methodology. Case studies provide a comprehensive exploration of intricate real-life matters, such as policy, organization, or planning (Yin, 2011). The research participants were 14 academic staff members, all involved in the planning, direction, and implementation of the programs. Semi-structured interviews were held with each of them. They were requested to answer questions such as: "What do you do differently than in the traditional training programs?"; "What characterises your teaching?"; "With what challenges have you been struggling?"; "In your opinion, what are the interests and needs of the program's participants during the training, given the context in which they work?"; "Does having selected teaching as a second career affect the teaching-learning processes?"

We also analysed documents written over the years, programs submitted to tenders and steering committees, and workshop syllabuses from all the years of activity.

A qualitative content analysis was performed to determine, interpret, and generalise the significance of the research. The analysis had three stages and was grounded in both deductive and inductive processes (Bingham, 2023). First, we defined five domains (top down deductive analysis): Content, Program design, Principles and modes of action, Professional community and Implementation challenges. In the second stage each researcher analyses all the gathered data individually in (boom up inductive analysis). Finally, we formulated and refined the themes jointly.

An institutional ethics committee approved the research, and all participants consented to the use of the interviews and documents in the study.

Findings

According to the analysis, there is a desire to make changes in the design and implementation of programs and to instil socio-educational worldviews in five domains:

1. Content
2. Program design
3. Principles and modes of action
4. Professional community
5. Implementation challenges

In each domain, we will present the specific themes that have emerged and characterized the changes. Consequently, within certain domains, we may observe similar ideas from various perspectives.

Content

Three leading themes pertaining to this domain emerged in the interviews, the program outlines, and the workshops' syllabi. Collectively, they provide a comprehensive view of the context that shaped the programs' content design.

From a classroom teacher to a social leader: Expanding the role of the teacher

The findings reveal contents that include, alongside the traditional pedagogical-didactic contents, equity contents (such as social justice, inclusion and exclusion, teaching as an act of leadership, entrepreneurship, and change driving) and contents relevant to local contexts (such as LGBT youths, teenager advancement, refugee children).

The staff have to deal with all these topics and face related issues and complex questions. In the interviews, the staff members commented on the content learning processes they experience simultaneously with their second career teacher students:

As a teacher, I must be inquisitive, critical, a learner, and be aware of diverse content types. This obliges me to bring up challenging questions and not fear touching on them. I must also adjust to the unique profile of students who have chosen teaching as a second career.

To me, the training is a kind of journey in quest of who and what I am and what my role is in this world.

The teaching staff also commented on the challenges:

The main challenge is to involve them in what is important rather than urgent. The students are chiefly concerned with the here and now: school schedules, an inattentive student, an uncooperative teacher in the teachers' hall. To succeed in switching abruptly from the here and now to a comprehensive socio-educational undertaking is no easy task.

Another staff member said:

Catching their attention and making them interested in engaging with the training's core issues and becoming educational change drivers is challenging. We prepare them for a critical, observant, and feedback-oriented discourse. Once this happens, the results surface in class. I cannot teach them to

ask questions without taking notice of myself as a teacher, the patterns I use. I saw this as my net gain as I have made many efforts to improve.

The quotes above highlight the substantial thought and effort put into crafting precise and effectively integrated content. An emphasis on integration emerged as a critical aspect of the content.

From separation to integration

The programs' design replaced the traditional content division into defined courses with an integrative structure based on main topics and basic value-oriented concepts. We identified six basic value-oriented connecting concepts: education for democracy, multiculturalism, digital literacy, knowledge construction, agency, and change leadership. Staff members mentioned the unique nature of this integrative approach:

The integrative teaching approach sees the students as holistic entities and regards them and their mission from every possible angle, considering, of course, their choice of taking up teaching as a second career." Along with its advantages, one difficulty of integration is that when numerous complex issues are dealt with simultaneously the learning experience is not sufficiently thorough "We are required to teach educational theories, tools and practices, pedagogy and didactics, and engage with the educational identity of each student. I feel that many matters are not handled with sufficient thoroughness due to time constraints.

Another staff member adds:

Another challenge is deciding what I should leave out of my study program. I have often felt that I was wrong in not teaching my Hotam students some topics, but the tight schedule obliged me to give them up. The result was good! I felt I chose the ones most appropriate for our training.

Alongside integrative thinking that replaces traditional thematic course structures, the activity space plays a significant role in determining the content, as the following themes shows.

From a general pedagogic context to a local educational one

The findings indicate the impact of the ever-present designers' vision, the context, and the feedback from the field on the programs' character. All those engaged in the educational context – the program participants, partners, and field actors keep an ongoing dialogue. This dialogue allows addressing issues originating in the field, often dynamic content not defined in advance.

One staff member noted:

The combination of foci, tours, and city figures makes the learning authentic and intensifies the experience. Emphasising urban aspects mediates the idea of contextual learning.

Another member said:

In the Hotam program, the training coordinators accompanying the students in the field are an inseparable part of the training, making the connection between the field and the activity context an integral part of the program.

We also found in the syllabuses local-based activities: meetings with local change leaders, practising in local excluded children schools and teenagers, and visits to local learning centers in Tel Aviv.

The data analysis revealed that the rationale behind the content impacts the program's structure, as illustrated in the next domains.

Program design

The programs are designed to cater to the content and specific requirements of each. Both programs feature a tight training timeframe characterised by intensive learning and time constraints:

Teachers, give us another minute. We wish to learn everything possible rapidly to fulfil our mission.

The programs' structure has the advantage of providing a solid basis of learning over a short period and conceptualising the central structural features of the new knowledge – being a teacher, with emphasis on the distinctive nature of second career teacher training.

The findings reveal an adjustment of the time divisions, structures, and learning groups to the content and the mission. Three characteristics surfaced in the structural layout analysis, represented in the following three themes.

From an individual-oriented to a group-oriented support structure

A central anchor found in the learning frameworks' structure was forming a group to generate change-leading power. The purpose was to create for the students a group to lean on over their period of studies but also in future activity contexts. Thus, the group becomes a basis for individual professional development of staff members and students during the training period. The students have in common their choice to enter teaching as a second career, their vision, norms of action, and a sense of mission. In the Hotam training program, for example, the students are organised in two groups. First is the home group, to which the students belong according to their residence and work location and where they learn generic non-discipline-specific content. Second is the discipline group, whose participants are assigned by their academic specialisation and learn content related to teaching their field. This training structure creates a cohesive continuum. The joint practice and learning follow the links between theoretical studies and teaching practices. This is achieved by learning relevant core contents contextually and integrally instead of separately and without interconnection (Shani et al., 2017).

In the program "To be a teacher in Tel Aviv" the training is organised in groups that follow the places of practice within Tel Aviv. Each group is assigned a training school, a tutor, and a coordinator. The groups study together and invite their fellow-groups on tours and activities in different city contexts.

The staff members perceive themselves not only as "lecturers in a training program" but also as responsible for creating and consolidating a fellow community:

Learning in and belonging to two groups allows them to form solid social groups, which is predicted to influence the quality of their teaching in school. My role in such training is different and more significant as I am not only there to teach a knowledge unit but also be the group's guide. As such, I am responsible for consolidating the group and its evolving dynamics. Personally, I have become more professional in group facilitation. This has been my developmental challenge since I began teaching in the program.

Another staff member underscored the group's importance to performing tasks:

Becoming part of a practice group in schools builds up the students' identity. They have become a group with specific knowledge and experience gathered in their contacts with leading school figures and acquaintance with the school, the population, and the neighbourhood. This context-derived knowledge comes up in school discussions that reveal how connected they are.

In addition to the value attributed to creating a fellow community, the training year structure is adjusted to the needs of students who are practising teachers, as explained in the following theme.

From a structure aligned with the academic year to one tailored to teachers' needs

The traditional academic year content-supported structure has been adjusted to the needs of on-the-job training teachers. One feature of the new learning design is that it considers needs related to switching from one career to a new one. To allow for a transition period where the participants leave their previous work or employment and adjust to a teaching career, the programs are organised around the school calendar:

At Hotam, we have decided that the training year should follow the school life-beat and holidays rather than the academic year schedule, to fit the needs of the Hotam teachers. The entire training period, from the summer term to the program's completion is divided into six spans where the learned content is adjusted to the needs of the Hotam students at different stages of their professional development: an online pre-training stage preceding the summer term that focuses on the academic discipline; an intensive five-week boarding-school summer term, including a teaching practice at a summer school; plunging in – from entering the school immediately after the summer training until December; routine – from December through April; takeoff – from April to the end of the training year.

In the program "To be a teacher in Tel Aviv":

The training structure allows the participants to continue their previous work during their initial training period. In July, they leave it for a month of learning, followed by a month of preparation and introduction to the school in August. In September, when the school year begins, they resume their classes and workshops.

The next theme describes the transition from a traditional hierarchical structure to a matrix management structure.

From a hierarchical structure to a matrix management structure

The planning documents reveal two axes of matrix-oriented thinking: One revolves around the work with the studied content, and the other shows the social goal in four contexts:

1. Socio-cultural (global, in Israel, in the city)
2. Educational – the education system and the school
3. Personal, identity minded – "Where am I in this?"
4. Educational work in class.

The matrix structure allows associating between contexts, as one of the academic staff members said:

Planning along two axes helps the program become integrative. We aim to examine every content within different but related contexts. This structure allows both the academic staff and the students to make these connections and turn the agenda into practice in class.

This training structure is suitable for those who choose a second career in teaching. It integrates their extensive knowledge in various fields into their teaching practices in a relatively short time. A complex structure such as this is the only way to generate a holistic conceptual change in the teacher's role as a social change driver.

The principles and modes of action representing the connection between content and structure are outlined in the following domains.

Principles and modes of action

The analysed findings show that the programs' design follows five modes of action that link content with structure, as described below.

From casual encounters with different lecturers to steady timetables, locations and staff

A central characteristic of the program regards the emphasis the academic staff puts on personal ties and tutoring the students. The same staff members accompany them throughout the entire training period, and they meet them at regular times and places.

One staff member notes:

A desire to educate and teach, curiosity in learning, and particularly uninterrupted personal ties from the training's beginning to its end – all these are, in my opinion, the three advantages of the Hotam program compared to other courses and programs.

Another one says:

By teaching them from the very first course and then getting to know them over instruction and research I manage to develop the right personal connection with each of them. In the last course I managed to connect with A, you remember my difficulties with her at the beginning. The lessons all take place in the same classrooms, and outside the classroom, the social encounters and joint meals all occur in special dedicated areas.

Yet another staff member points out that the connections continue even after the training year is over:

The commitment, time, and energy invested in the students are more thorough than traditional teaching. I am the only person teaching them their disciplinary field. In fact, I perceive myself as accompanying them throughout the year as well as in the following years. I am still in close contact with Hotam students I taught about five years ago. I also run an active WhatsApp group and a shared knowledge database of Hotam graduates from all the years. I think this commitment springs from the training approach that sees the students as holistic entities so that the teaching addresses all their dimensions. The instruction also considers their pressing sense of mission and does everything to assist them as far as possible, meet their urgent needs, and train them optimally for this important teaching mission.

The next theme adds another layer to the guidance and support the academic staff members offer.

From on-campus to field-anchored learning

The program participants learn and teach simultaneously. Their interviews reveal that teaching in schools

alongside academic learning engenders parallel processes that largely define the teaching-learning-evaluation processes in the workshops. The staff members note the link between introducing their practice into the learning sessions and the opportunity to immediately implement what they learn in the workshop and in class and their teaching modes.

Since the program includes on-the-job training, they can experiment in their classes on what they have learned and later report about it. They also share with their peers [in the program] their field experiences, enriching the learning and making it more relevant and significant. With the Hotam students, we have to do what I wish every teacher trainer would do: look for ways to teach the theory in association with the practice, be a didactic model, and design workshops linked with the students' educational field.

Another staff member reinforces this stand: "The connection with the schools is central to the teaching in our program [...] I see them implementing what I teach, sending me examples on the very same day they had learned them in class."

One staff member mentions her modes of action:

In class, studying is workshop-like, combining comments and examples from their field work. Specifically, I frequently use technology-reinforced collaborative learning and numerous learning spaces, including the flexible learning space in the college, outdoors, in the art room, etc. I organise the learned topics learned over the year to cover first basic knowledge and practices in disciplinary teaching and later expose them to experiencing innovative teaching modes.

The program participants' transition from individual learning to active learning in their fellow community supports their practising and teaching in various field sites and meeting regularly.

From individual learning to collaborative learning

Workshop learning in permanent groups facilitates forming fellow communities, as mentioned in one interview:

By exposing them to various modes of action, workshop learning in belonging groups solidifies them as a social unit. It supports their career change process, helps them cope with challenges in school, and enhances their teaching quality in their assigned schools.

Learning within a fellow community allows the individual participants sufficient room for expression, thorough acquaintance, and joint work. Three modes of action support this learning. The first is creating a common language:

The presentations revealed a newly created common language. They use the educational terminology freely in a way the whole group understands.

The second is giving each member the space and significance they deserve:

As a facilitator, I must allow all the group members to study appropriately and express themselves optimally, avoiding any sense of discrimination or preference towards this or that member.

The third is handling tensions and disagreements via a dialogue:

Preparing for the tour was a long process. The training had just begun, and we had to prepare for working in a group. The tour plan was in a southern neighbourhood of the city. While discussing its purposes, much tension emerged. I allowed them space, and we did not pass over dealing with the disagreements. It took several meetings to prepare the tour, but it finally was significant to them and the other participants. The process built up the group.

The move to active learning in a fellow community is combined with knowledge-production processes by the students.

From knowledge consumption to knowledge construction

The programs emphasise knowledge production by the learners-teachers:

A leading principle in our work is constant choice and knowledge production by the participants. In every learning framework, the content is not ready-made. It requires searching, organising, and structuring to create new knowledge shaped by the participants, preferably in an exclusive way of their own, namely, from their perspective based on previous knowledge, experiences, or any other personal interpretation of their choice.

The knowledge-production principle applies to both routine learning and special events the learners organise themselves – tours, exhibitions, and symposia. One such striking example is the Hotam program's "Togetherness Day," a day entirely planned and run by Hotam students under the direction of that year's Hotam students' council. It is the program's highest point, highlighting the cultivation of change-leading teachers and based on independent learning in a fellow community. It offers fifty workshops on diverse topics of interest. Over the day, the learners moderate one workshop and participate in four others (Shani and Shadmi-Wortman, 2022).

The next theme that came up in all the interviews with the staff members is a combination of all the previous four themes: The transition from knowledge acquisition to a holistic learning experience.

From a knowledge acquisition to a holistic learning experience

The interviews reveal the programs' broad holistic perception of the learning experience as a model of optimal teaching:

In my opinion, this exclusive learning requires me to constantly engage with questions of personal and professional identity and socio-political issues. As an educator, I must explore my stand on these issues." Regarding the overall outcome of this work: "I keep pondering on how the training offers a response to inspired teaching.

The preoccupation with "how to apply teaching modelling in my instruction" keeps appearing in the staff members comments. The program rationale maintains that the learning experience of the learners-teachers would determine the learning experience of their students. One of the teaching staff commented:

We dedicate much thought to our modelling. At every session, I keep zooming in and out to show how I taught and planned, my purposes, what we can learn from my teaching, and my pedagogical considerations during the session.

Together, all these outlined principles and modes of action engender a holistic experience that considers the learner's personal and professional provenance and supports all the development process layers. To

enhance the holistic learning experience, the staff members must work in cooperation and form a supportive fellow group themselves. The next domain describes the professional community during training.

A professional community

Alongside forming a learners' community of program participants, the academic staff itself constitutes a developing professional community. In the data analysis, the following staff members' characteristics emerge: Willingness and aptness for working in collaboration as a team, ability to continuously guide and tutor the learners, motivation to learn and develop, and a display of knowledge and professional authority. These characteristics surface in the following three themes.

From professional isolation to a professional community

The status of the staff members teaching in the programs changes from solo-performers teaching specific content courses to members of a professional fellow community, sharing responsibility for the program's development:

Our teamwork is different from any other I have participated in. It is significantly more collaborative, intensive, and based on collective thinking.

The staff members describe a team that is a professional community intent on paving a new path based on joint learning:

Joint development generates an unusual brainstorming so that all the teaching staff members refine the workshop and contribute to the teaching materials.

About the personal development of each community member:

I really enjoy developing learning units. It so happened that every year I and some of my friends were responsible for developing a content unit. The more experience I gained, the better my unit development skills became.

The Joint community work that replaced individual work also had destabilising effects that required reorganisation. The next theme shows them.

From confidence to undermining and from undermining to reorganisation

The staff members pointed out that from being experts in their fields, they turned into learners of new topics and processes they had not needed previously:

This is my sixth year as a teacher in the training program, and I still challenge myself, changing myself and others to fit the group and my personal development. Work at Hotam occupies a massive part of my thoughts and actions during the week, regardless of the actual teaching hours or the group's size...

Teaching in the program requires knowledge and learning of often unknown content:

In team meetings, knowledge sometimes came up that was required for the program but was new to some staff members. As program leaders, we must make the knowledge accessible and allow time and space to learn the new topics. Much of this learning occurs within the team's joint work.

This destabilisation is accompanied by reorganisation and learning:

I have personally become more professional in group guiding. When I first began my work with Hotam, this was a developmental challenge. I believe I have met it. I often tell my Hotam students that I would have undoubtedly been a better classroom teacher if I had known then what I know today.

Reorganisation is also an opportunity for creativity in teaching, as one staff member notes:

I introduced communication with the group members via a short discussion of topics from the weekly Torah section. Initially, only the summer training program included a weekly writing assignment. However, I fell in love with writing and saw it as an opportunity to learn somewhat more complex topics in a small WhatsApp forum. Compared with my early notes, I notice an improvement in the writing quality and the art of concise writing, paradoxically although the posts are longer.

Another characteristic of the professional learning community is a changed perception of teaching, as shown in the following theme.

From a teacher trainer to a mentor of educational leaders

In programs whose purpose is preparing to drive a social change, the staff must change their teaching approach and redefine the goals of the teachers' training:

In class, we always maintain a dialogue about personal-professional identity and the association between a teacher and an educational leader. I do not give up this dialogue and the connection with the ultimate mission even when daily reality takes over and risks to sweep us into dealing with whatever is urgent rather than with the essence of the objective at hand.

Another staff member adds:

Naturally, dealing with often explosive and controversial social issues is impossible in a knowledge transfer format. My teaching is based on dialogue, creating an embracing yet challenging space, underscoring give-and-take in learning, "polyphony", and critical learning that focuses on leadership in teaching.

A staff that functions as a change-leading community, learns and develops in light of the challenges it faces. The following implementation challenges came up in the data analysis.

Implementation challenges

The following three themes describe the main implementation challenges included in this fifth domain:

From teacher education of pre-service teachers to teacher education of second career teachers

A focal challenge in the programs is teaching older students with previous knowledge and experience who chose to pursue a new career:

This population has not taken up education by default but by choice. This changes all, as it is an educated choice. It is mostly a quality population, they are very aware of social and political issues, and regard education as significant and highly valuable. This allows for high-level learning and discourse, effective interaction, and learning with willingness and commitment.

The interviewees stressed that this population chose teaching as a second career:

The Hotam students have made a choice, and the link between their personal and professional identity is a central resource in my teaching.

Teaching educated, experienced individuals, each in their field, in the most suitable, flexible, eye-level way was a challenge:

As the supervisor, you must speak to this older population at eye-level, explain what you are doing and why.

Some of the program's students have experience speaking before audiences and instructing them, but they lack theoretical knowledge. One staff member explained:

Intuitive teaching is often successful. Every "natural teacher," anyone having an inborn teaching capacity, can enter a classroom and succeed in teaching students and communicating with them. This, however, is not professional. Such teaching exclusively leans on personal abilities and is bound to fail eventually due to the undeveloped ability to handle unfamiliar cases of the type often encountered in education. Consistent success in the teaching profession requires a combination of the personal capabilities of the Hotam participants with theories and studies that would allow them to implement what they learn routinely in class.

An additional challenge to teaching second-career academic students is that they learn while teaching.

From pre-service to in-service training

The teaching staff's students practise teaching already during training. Several aspects of being students and teachers at the same time reappear in the interviews.

The need for relevance:

Every topic learned passes through the filter of 'How relevant is this for me in class tomorrow?' This search for practical advantages is difficult for the teaching staff. On the other hand, it obliges us to be more relevant, better connected to the field.

The wish to combine theoretic and practical learning:

Associating practice and theory is a cornerstone in the program. I try linking field issues that preoccupy them daily with theoretical learning in the workshop and hope that the theory learned at the workshop influences classroom practices. This is not always simple...

A sense of responsibility for the students' teaching in class:

We feel responsible for their next-day teaching in school, for the students they meet.

Struggling with frustration and missing tools:

I sense a tension between field-based teaching – primal teaching and long-term teaching – values, ideals, leadership.

Their challenges mainly spring from their daily pedagogical and didactic needs. The content part was clear to them, but they were concerned about how to teach and adjust the lesson plan to the students' diversity in their class." Another focal challenge was training for change driving".

From 'Immediate needs' training to educational leaders' training

To train as change-leading teachers in a short time, the students must adjust and prepare for a complex reality while consolidating their capacity to bring about change. The tension between preparing to face reality while not replicating it comes up clearly in the interviews:

A perceptual change alongside an adjustment to reality are required for teaching that generates change. They must understand that along with learning the principles of fieldwork and integrating into an existing system, they must always keep in mind the required change, their responsibility for it, and ways to drive it.

The staff members stress the need to keep hammering the message that change is possible. The words of one staff member clearly illustrate the great challenge the staff faces:

Always make them see that it is possible. Here I am, a teacher doing it within the system. Show them also how.

The gap between the vision and reality is frustrating, and this frustration often creates tension in the workshops:

This also compels me to face the anger or frustration of teachers who have recently entered the system and wish to acquire the tools they need and learn what they should do. We must resist this immediate need and remind them why we are there, the larger picture – aspiring to change reality, which first requires us to connect with what is important and motivates us in this world.

Another staff member adds:

One big challenge is not to succumb to the current reality and constantly remind yourself of the broader mission and why we are here. The Hotam participants may sometimes feel they are losing their way and drowning. They demand that we provide them with tools and practices to help them succeed the next day in class. We must know what to do in the face of this pressure but also embrace their difficulty and distress.

Figure 1. displays the five domains revealed in the findings and the themes they comprise each.

Domain	From	To
	➔	
Content	Classroom teacher	Social leader: extending the teacher's roles
	Separation	Integration
	General pedagogical context	Local educational context
	➔	
Program design	Individual-oriented structure	Group-oriented support structure
	Structure adjusted to the academic year	Structure adjusted to the teacher's professional needs
	Hierarchic structure	Matrix-oriented structure
	➔	
Principles and mode of action	Encounters with different lecturers	Steady mentors and timetables
	On campus	Field-anchored studies
	Individual learning	Collaborative learning
	Knowledge consumption	Knowledge construction
	Knowledge acquisition process	Holistic learning experience
	➔	
Professional community	Professional isolation	Professional community
	Confidence	Undermining
	Undermining	Reorganization
		Leadership and educational training
	➔	
Implementation challenges	First-career students	Second-career teacher students
	Pre-service training	In-service training
	"Immediate needs" training	Educational leaders' training

Figure 1. Domains and themes.

These five interweaving domains produce the cohesive holistic fabric characterizing the programs. In both the planning and implementation stages, a spiral planning process emerges that moves between visionary theoretic thinking and an effort to implement it from the perspectives of the five domains, considering time, resource constraints, and the system's formal demands.

Discussion

The research findings reveal that the initiators of exclusive teacher-training programs design and implement the programs based on a change in five domains: content, structure, modes of action, professional community characteristics, and definition of the implementation challenges. The changes made represent a holistic view of teaching and learning, apparent in each of the aspects. This approach aligns with the claim that achieving a socio-educational change requires a broad view of teaching with all its cognitive, emotional, and value-oriented facets. Consequently, the teachers must be activists, have agency, be entrepreneurial, and be capable of leading social change (Hokka, et al., 2017; Mahmoudi et al., 2012; Miller, 2000).

In terms of training content, a shift occurred from exclusive engagement with pedagogy and teaching skills to a broader view of the teacher's role as a socio-educational leader. An integrative view of content regards

the local context as an element of content. Learning is linked with in-the-field education, similar to other socially focused programs worldwide, such as urban education programs, known to promote the training of proactive teachers with a sense of self-efficacy (Darling-Hammond and Hyler 2020; Hammerness and Matsko, 2013).

In terms of training content, there has been a significant shift from a sole focus on pedagogy and teaching skills to a more comprehensive perspective of the teacher's role as a socio-educational leader. This evolved approach integrates the local context as an integral component of the educational content.

The programs are designed to cultivate a community of both learners and educators who collaborate as equal partners in pursuit of their shared mission.

They stand out for having a flexible time, place, and content structure. Their design follows matrix thinking that allows for articulating socio-educational purposes in every learning framework. This flexibility enables handling each field of content from a broad perspective and processing cognitive, emotional, and social aspects. (Carmon, 2010; Glassner and Back, 2020; Mahmoudi et al. 2012; Miller, 2000;).

Additional areas that have a preference in the programs include a learning anchored in the field, familiarity with the local context of the teachers' work, and theory-practice synergy, a necessary feature of any teacher training (Clandinin and Husu, 2017; Consuegra et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2016; Kimmelmann and Lang, 2019; ; Zeichner, 2017); and learning the local context to promote equality and narrow gaps (Hammerness and Matsko, 2013; Hammerness and Craig, 2016; Matsko and Hammerness, 2014).

The research substantiates previous findings of the vital role of a professional learning community in driving change processes and coping with the personal and group challenges emerging in training and fieldwork. (Apple, 2012; Wenger and Trayner, 2012; Fullan, 2006; Margolin, et al., 2018). The findings underscore the importance and focal role of the professional community of educators from various disciplines running the programs and their conviction that a change is required to move the focus from teacher training to training for teaching and leading a socio-educational change. As partners to the idea and the mission, the community shows signs of simultaneous learning and teaching processes.

Conclusions

A training framework whose participants chose to convert into teaching and whose purpose is generating a socio-educational change should consider the students' perceptions, skills sets, areas of expertise, and prior experiences. To achieve this, it is imperative to address all facets of their personal and professional growth throughout their training and consider their needs holistically.

The findings indicate that community learning is highly advantageous for change driving processes. The sense of partnership allows the learners to exchange knowledge and learn from each other, developing a professional identity through interaction and the shared mission.

Alongside cultivating the community, a clear need emerged for a dialogue with the field, together with a willingness to learn from practising professionals, in a way that connects theory with practice. Indeed, basing the teacher training on field experience requires the staff to keep learning continuously. Alongside cultivating the community, a clear need emerged for a dialogue with the field, together with a willingness to learn from practicing professionals, in a way that connects theory with practice. Indeed, basing the teacher training on field experience requires the staff to keep learning continuously.

Efforts should be invested in fostering a professional community of involved learning staff members, to

facilitate these processes. The shared training responsibility requires creating cooperation and communication channels, setting up common databases, and designing shared decision-making processes. The intensive and intimate joint work makes the "training spirit" a solid support for the programs to lean on even in challenging moments. As one staff member eloquently put it:

What makes the training program unique to me is the different spirit that aims high and does not compromise. Engaging with something deserving and valuable, not giving up and always aspiring for inspiration." The strong connection between all the partners and their dedication to the mission's way is a power center that makes possible this mission that sometimes appears impossible, allowing the community and its members to grow.

In the current period of uncertainty and continuing changes, we find that investing in the teaching staff and cultivating it as a fellow community is the foundation that enables teacher training to adjust to changes in content and learning mode while remaining relevant without compromising the learning quality and thoroughness. This proves the professional community's resilience, strong bond, and uncompromising professionalism.

Nowadays, opting for education necessarily means opting for change driving. We must, therefore, learn from the alternative training programs and design teacher training in the spirit of socio-educational change driving.

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