BEGINNING SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN ISRAEL: PERCEIVED SELF-EFFICACY

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The purpose of this study was to examine perceived self-efficacy among beginning special education teachers in Israel related to their educational roles and responsibilities. Ninety-three first-year teachers participated in the study. The research was carried out using the mixed method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research instruments. The research instrument used was the "Perceptions of Special Education Teachers of their Roles" questionnaire, based on the CEC Initial Level Special Educator Preparation Standards for 2013. The results indicated a high percentage of respondents reporting stronger perceived self-efficacy regarding their ability to deal with crises involving students, understanding and respecting human diversity, and understanding the law and professional ethics and applying them. In contrast, a low percentage of respondents reported stronger perceived self-efficacy regarding their ability to cooperate with faculty members and parents in general, as well as to plan and carry out complex teaching processes in a variety of situations requiring the teacher possess a wide range of innovative knowledge.

The conceptual and practical changes that have taken place during the past four decades relating to students with special needs have in turn changed the role of special education teachers until it is almost unrecognizable (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007; Purcell, Horn, & Palmer, 2007). Special education teachers today work in broad and open frameworks and in complex organizational systems that require they possess wide-ranging knowledge of the discipline; have strategies to deal with many fields of responsibility; and possess expertise, leadership qualities, and the ability to lead the educational staff (Jorgensen, Shuh, & Nisbet, 2006). Special education teachers must supply an ever-increasing number of educational services to an assortment of students with and without special needs (Hoover & Patton, 2008), guide general teachers in developing teaching activities adapted to these students, and take part in regular daily teaching tasks (Eisenman, Pleet, Wandry, & McGinley, 2011). Effective handling of these multitude of duties requires teachers have a strong sense of efficacy (Kiran, Yousuf, Siddique, & Ehsan, 2014).

Wigle & Wilcox (2003) examined perceived self-efficacy in fulfilling educational roles among special education teachers with diverse experiences. The study covered five US states that follow the standards defined in 1997 by the CEC as criteria for measuring perceived self-efficacy. The teachers reported strongest self-efficacy regarding their ability to carry out traditional roles – such as understanding and interpreting information about special needs students – which decreased gradually as they were required to handle newer roles, like developing relations with out-of-school agencies. The study presented in this article also deals with perceived self-efficacy among special education teachers regarding performance of their duties as required by the CEC standards, but refers to its criteria developed in 2012 and focuses on Israeli first-year teachers. The objective of this study was to examine beginning special education teachers' perceived self-efficacy regarding role performance.

First, we will present the literature dealing with the changes that have occurred in the role of special education teachers and perceived self-efficacy among the teachers; then we will present our research findings, which examine perceived self-efficacy among special education teachers vis-à-vis performance of their roles.

Literature Review
During the last 40 years, special education has undergone radical change. Until the 1970s, the categorical approach ruled, which placed the learning and behavioral needs of special needs students on a continuum of severity, and saw special education teaching a means to reach developmental milestones according to accepted norms. During the 1980s, with the introduction of inclusion of students with special needs in general education, this was replaced by a non-categorical approach that questioned the relevance of categorization to planning and carrying out effective teaching and produced direct, explicit, and systematic teaching focused on the functional progress of the individual. During the 1990s, understanding that the main mission of special education is to prepare students with special needs for full membership in the community by guaranteeing access to the entire range of educational and social opportunities offered by the school, the role of special education teachers again underwent change (Ainscow, 2007; Winzer,2007). They began working in a large variety of teaching situations, moving from self-contained academic classes to general classes in regular schools. In these situations, their tasks were broadened and measures of success not present in the past were added, making them more complex and demanding. Special education teachers are today required to attain more ambitious goals responding to every-increasing cultural differences, languages, learning styles, disabilities, and capabilities; to possess a richer repertoire of strategies; and to teach a wide variety of information content to various age groups. They must cooperate with a diverse group of professionals (Eisenman et al., 2011; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007; Thousand, Nevin, & Villa, 2007), provide advisory services to general teachers (Robinson & Carrington, 2002), and develop the assistance they need (Idol, 2006). Today they must work in full cooperation with the families of students with special needs and understand and respect their senior position in the process (Dunlap, Newton, Fox, Benito, & Vaughn, 2001).

In reality, special education teachers today are expected to perform many functions that are not purely teaching (Wasburn-Moses, Leah, 2005), including providing leadership in the school in implementing inclusion (York-Barr, Sommerness, Duke, & Ghere, 2005). As leaders, they must have a command of numerous organizational approaches (Bowman, 2004; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) and incorporate an innovative educational approach in the school concerning social justice, human rights, and labeling (Shepherd & Hasazi, 2007; Dunlap, et al., 2001)

These requirements and responsibilities are based on standards updated in 2013 by the Council of Exceptional Children (CEC). One section of the standards is devoted exclusively to beginning teachers: CEC Initial Level Special Educator Preparation Standards (NCATE approved November 2012). Another is devoted to experienced teachers: CEC Special Education Specialist Advanced Preparation Standards (NCATE approved November 2012). Both standards demand teachers rise to difficult challenges. Hartmann (2012) suggested that effective responses by special education teachers to such challenges in their work is tied to high self-efficacy, which has been described as individuals' belief in their ability to carry out a particular behavior well, leading to the desired result. This belief influences human behavior in the sense that it determines how individuals organize the actions necessary to control unexpected situations and how they invest the necessary effort in their tasks, and the extent of their ability to persevere in their undertakings (Bandura, 1977). Teachers' self-efficacy is described as their subjective perception of their ability to carry out tasks related to teaching and educating students, as well as those associated with the organization in general. It is also related to having good personal relationships, integrating into the organization, and successfully coping with threatening situations – both concerning the school administration and colleagues, and the classroom (Friedman & Kas, 2002).

Wigle & Wilcox (2003) examined perceived self-efficacy among special education teachers with one to three years' experience regarding their ability to perform their roles. Their research was carried out in five US states that use the standards set by the CEC in 1997 as measures of self-efficacy. The teachers reported strongest levels of self-efficacy in performing traditional roles – such as understanding and interpreting information about special needs students – which weakened gradually as the roles required they cope more with challenges presented by the newer components, such as developing relations with out-of-school agencies. The study reported here adopted this research line for examining perceived self-efficacy among special education teachers in Israel during their first year of teaching.

In Israel, special education teachers, like teachers in other specialties, receive their training in universities and teacher training colleges. Most teachers in Israel have attended teacher training colleges, which specialize only in training teachers. These are academic institutions that grant B.Ed. degrees; some also grant M.Ed. degrees. Undergraduate curriculums include education and teaching courses, appropriate specialization courses, and internship programs, as well as support and enrichment courses. The courses are taught in combination during four years of training, at the end of which graduates receive degrees in special education teaching and special education

teaching certificates. Students can begin working as active teachers beginning the last year of undergraduate studies, but are required to participate in an induction program during this period. Successful completion of the program is a precondition for receiving a teaching license in special education. The work of the interns – also known as beginning teachers – participating in the induction program includes continuous and active teaching, managing a classroom, and fulfilling educational functions (Israeli Ministry of Education, 2015). It is appropriate to ask here to what extent beginning special education teachers in Israel who have just completed their training feel capable of coping with the variety of roles they are expected to perform. The answer to this question may, in our opinion, indicate the extent to which they have been adequately prepared to cope with the complexity of their job, especially its innovative aspects, and, further, shed light on the places requiring improvement and correction. This is the basis of the present research. The purpose of this study was to examine beginning Israeli special education teachers' perceived self-efficacy to perform their roles.

 Research Questions:
1. What are the perceived self-efficacy levels of beginning special education teachers regarding their ability to perform their roles?
2. What characterizes perceived self-efficacy of beginning special education teachers regarding their ability to perform their roles?

Method

The research was carried out using the mixed-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative instruments. This approach helped us reach results focusing on the level of self-efficacy among teachers regarding the various roles they are expected to perform, as well as understand how perceived self-efficacy is manifested and its implications for teachers.

Research Participants

Ninety-three beginning teachers participated in the study. They were all in their internship year in one large teacher training college located in the center of the country. Because similar teacher training models are used in all such colleges in Israel, one college should be representative of them all. The participants attended one of two induction programs, that is, the data were collected over two years.

All of the participants were trained to be special education teachers. Of them, 71 (76%) were in their fourth year of college and 22 (24%) had finished their studies. The age of the participants ranged from 22.2 to 35.4; the mean age was 25.8. Of the participants, 88 (95%) were women and 5 (5%) were men; 11 (11.8%) were kindergarten teachers and 82 (88.2%) were school teachers. Of the school teachers, 58 (71%) taught in elementary schools. Of them, 31 (33.3%) were facilitator support teachers in general classrooms and 27 (29%) taught in self-contained special education classrooms. Twenty-four teachers (25.8%) taught in middle and high schools, all in self-contained classrooms. All of the participants worked with students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, multiple and severe disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, emotional or behavioral disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, cerebral palsy, or learning disabilities.

Research Instruments

The research instrument we developed was entitled "The Perceptions of Special Education Teachers of their Roles" questionnaire. It comprised two sections: one quantitative and one qualitative. The quantitative section, as noted above, continued the research line began by Wigle and Wilcox (2003), which uses the standards set out by the CEC as measures for examining the self-efficacy of teachers. Even though Israel does not formally accept the American standards, the Israeli teacher training system seeks to rely on their general spirit and approach. We therefore used them for this study. The quantitative section of the questionnaire comprised two segments: the first included directions for completing the questionnaire and a request for background information. The second was a list of 35 statements describing the professional skills required, according to the CEC, from initial level special education teachers (2013). The standards appear as a series of complex statements, with detailed supporting explanations following each one. To create the questionnaire, we converted the standards into clearer and more focused statements, making use of the supporting explanations. After polishing the statements, we translated them into Hebrew. During the last stage we slightly changed the items so that they would be appropriate to the work culture prevalent in Israel. For example, we did not use the word "standards" because they are not, as previously mentioned, formally accepted in Israel. For each statement (skill), the participants were asked to indicate to what extent they felt competent on a six-point Likert scale: 1 (*incompetent*), 2 (s*lightly competent*), 3 (*moderately competent*), 4 (*very competent*), 5 (*exceedingly competent*), 6 (*absolutely competent*). The more competent they felt, the higher their self-efficacy score.

In the qualitative section of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to describe an incident in school during which they felt highly competent as a teacher. We asked this question in order to learn what types of incidents the teachers perceive as significantly representative of their professional competence and to understand its characteristics and significance to perceived self-efficacy.

Analysis of the Quantitative Data
Analysis of the quantitative data was carried out similarly to in Wigle and Wilcox's (2003) study. For each statement, we counted the number of respondents who reported high self-efficacy, 5 (*exceedingly competent*) and 6 (*absolutely competent*) on the scale, and calculated the percentage. We then arranged the items in decreasing order – from the statement (skill) for which the highest percentage of respondents indicated 5 or 6 on the scale to the statement for which the lowest percentage of respondents indicated 5 or 6. After completing these steps, we sorted the statements into six content groups according to what we considered was common to each group regarding teacher training in Israel.

Analysis of the Qualitative Data
The participants' responses to this section of the research were analyzed using the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), which searches in natural surroundings for new conceptualizations about the nature of processes. We chose this approach because it is an interpretive, constructivistic method that allows research participants to present their unique self-perspective while combining it with that of the researcher (Hutchinson, 1988). The analysis process included five stages. During the first stage, we created the initial categories and named them: each researcher holistically read each story separately in order to obtain a broad and comprehensive orientation. Then a more exacting reading was carried out. The unit of analysis was a "statement" in the story. The initial categories developed by each researcher were compared to those of the others. When differences of opinion occurred regarding two categories, an external arbitrator was called in to make the final decision. At the end of the first stage, there were five main categories. During the second stage of analysis, we defined each category in more detail so that it would more precisely describe the unique content falling under it. In addition, we moved statements from one category to another if we felt they would fit better. During this stage as well an external arbitrator was called in to settle differences of opinion. The categories we arrived at this stage were as follows: incident outset – facing a crisis situation involving a student; teacher intervention – independently, totally, and intuitively; intervention outcome – complete turnabout of the initial situation; incident ramifications – dramatic changes in the teacher's sense of efficacy; incident conclusion –teacher independently surmounts the crisis situation with the student as a means of developing sense of self-efficacy. During the third stage, we strengthened the internal validity of the results by condensing the amount of data from the interviews in each category, and ensuring that the constructions actually exist in the reality under study. During the fourth stage, we identified the core category – "The teacher's independent surmounting of a crisis situation with a student as a means of developing sense of self-efficacy." This category explains the rest of the categories, consolidates them, and thus confirms the grounded theory as follows: While carrying out their duties, teachers confront crisis situations usually involving the behavior of a student. In response, the teachers intervene independently and the intervention helps them surmount the incident and change the reality from top to bottom. The incident makes an enormous contribution to the self-efficacy of the teachers.

Research Process
During February of their first year as beginning teachers, the participants completed a questionnaire while attending a compulsory induction program in a teacher training institute. At this point in time the participants had six months of experience teaching and were still under the influence of their teacher training, the platform for their work. Simultaneously, they were sufficiently "distanced" from any initial difficulties they had experienced in adapting to their work that could naturally have contributed to a temporary decrease in their perceived self-efficacy.

Results
Results of the quantitative research
Results of the quantitative research can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage of respondents who indicated high levels of self-efficacy – "exceedingly competent" or "absolutely competent" – regarding each of the roles of the special education teacher according to the CEC (divided according to content groups)

	Percentage of respondents
First content group	
I am able to respect individuals with exceptionalities within the context of human development and individual learning differences.	55.9
I am capable of understanding how an individual's language, family, culture, and other significant contextual factors interact with an individual's exceptionality.	47.3
I am able to analyze how the beliefs, traditions, and values across and within cultures can influence relationships between students, their families, and the school community.	44.1
I am capable of understanding how the experiences of individuals with exceptionalities influence families, as well as the individual's ability to learn, interact socially, and live as fulfilled contributing members of the community.	43.0
I can accept diversity as a part of families, cultures, and schools, and can understand the interaction between complex human issues and the delivery of special education services.	42.8
Second content group	
I am proficient in behavior management, including the skills and knowledge to intervene safely and effectively before individuals with exceptionalities lose rational control over their behavior.	41.9
I am capable of intervening when individuals with exceptionalities encounter crises.	41.9
I am capable of teaching individuals with exceptionalities to adapt to the expectations and demands of differing environments	41.7
Third content group	
I can use professional ethics and apply them to guide my practice.	39.9
I can understand the legal policies and ethical principles of measurement and assessment related to special education program planning, individualized instruction, learning, and placement for individuals with exceptionalities, including individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.	39.8
Fourth content group	
I am able to collaborate with general education colleagues to include individuals with exceptionalities in general education environments, and engage them in meaningful learning activities and social interactions.	37.6
I can use the theory and elements of effective collaboration.	37.6
I am capable of providing guidance and direction to para-educators, tutors, and volunteers.	36.6
I am capable of co-teaching the content of the general curriculum to individuals with exceptionalities across a wide range of performance levels.	36.6
Fifth content group	
I am able to alter instructional variables to optimize learning for individuals with exceptionalities.	35.7
I know how to design appropriate learning and performance accommodations and modifications for individuals with exceptionalities in academic subject-matter content of the general curriculum.	34.4
I can understand the central concepts, structures of the discipline, and tools of inquiry of the academic subject-matter content areas I teach.	33.3
I can factor an individual's abilities, interests, learning environments, and cultural and linguistic background into the selection, development, and adaptation of learning experiences for individuals with exceptionalities.	32.5
I am able to modify the learning environment to accommodate for individual needs.	32.3
I am proficient in the use of technologies to support instructional assessment, planning, and delivery for individuals with exceptionalities.	32.3
I can use a variety of specialized curricula, e.g., academic, strategic, social, emotional, and independence curricula, to individualize meaningful and challenging learning for individuals with exceptionalities.	31.2
I am able to conduct formal and informal assessments of behavior, learning, achievement, and environments to individualize the learning experiences that support the growth and development	31.2

of individuals with exceptionalities.	
I am capable of regularly monitoring the learning progress of individuals with exceptionalities in both general and specialized content and making instructional adjustments based on these data.	31.2
I can apply strategies to enhance language development and communication skills of individuals with exceptionalities.	31.2
I can match my communication methods to an individual's language proficiency and cultural and linguistic differences.	30.1
I am capable of teaching cross-disciplinary knowledge and skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving to individuals with exceptionalities	29.0
I am familiar with augmentative and alternative communication systems and a variety of assistive technologies to support the communication and learning of individuals with exceptionalities.	29.0
I can employ technologies appropriately and efficiently to support and manage assessment of individuals with exceptionalities.	25.8
Sixth content group	
I understand how foundational knowledge and current issues influence professional practice.	23.7
I understand the significance of lifelong learning and can participate in professional activities and learning communities.	22.6
I can integrate the results of assessments to develop long-range individualized instructional plans, including family-service plans, transition plans, behavior-change plans.	20.4
I am capable of advancing the profession by engaging in activities such as advocacy and mentoring.	20.2
I am proficient in developing and implementing a variety of education and transition plans for individuals with exceptionalities across a wide range of settings and different learning experiences in collaboration with individuals, families, and teams.	19.4
I can serve as a collaborative resource to colleagues.	13.2
I have the ability to involve individuals with exceptionalities and their families collaboratively in all aspects of education.	12.1

Table 1 presents the percentage of respondents who indicated high self-efficacy levels for each of the skills required from special education teachers according to CEC. The skills are divided into six content groups. The first group comprises five skills with the highest percentage of respondents indicating high self-efficacy. They have in common "understanding, acceptance, and respect for the idea of human diversity regarding family, social, and cultural contexts and its effect on human life." In this content group, the teacher must understand the concepts that underlie special education, such as respect for human diversity and for people with disabilities; understand the various areas in which human diversity exists and their particular contexts regarding individuals and their environments; act to make the student with special needs a learner and a full member of the community; etc. The skills with the highest percentage of respondents indicating high self-efficacy levels in this group and in the entire questionnaire deal with respecting people with diverse disabilities – the foundation of special education.

The content group with the second highest percentage of respondents indicating high levels of self-efficacy comprises three skills that had in common "crisis management related to student behavior." Similar to the first group, this relates to the core of working in special education, but in contrast, here the teachers are required to have specials skills for intervention in acute crisis situations. The last item in this group does not necessarily deal with crisis situations, but even so contains an element of behavior management. In fact, the three skills that make up this group are the only ones in the entire list that deal with managing student behavior.

The third content group comprises only two skills that have in common "understanding the law and policies in special education and implementing a code of ethics at work." These skills are related to the public-moral dimensions of special education, which deal with abstract spaces that are not of the "here and now."

The fourth content group comprises four skills that have in common "collaboration of special education teachers with their colleagues." Two of the skills deal with collaboration with general teachers for the purpose of inclusion of students with special needs in general education; the two others are not specific. Collaboration includes co-teaching and instructing non-specialist personnel.

The fifth content group comprises 14 skills that have in common "planning, implementation, and assessment of the teaching of students with special needs based on the teacher's innovative and wide-ranging knowledge." The items here include possessing both deep-seated and wide-ranging disciplinary and inter-disciplinary knowledge and curriculum planning based on the traits of each individual and their environment, combining advanced technologies with alternative communication methods, curriculum implementation, and monitoring and assessing the curriculum. The skills in this group are apparently the classic skills of special education teachers, although they have innovative components, like being familiar with communication systems, using technologies to support learning and manage it, familiarity with the general education system, etc.

The sixth and last content group had the lowest percentage of respondents with high self-efficacy levels. It comprises seven skills. Two topics – complex and innovative in the work of the teacher – have the following skills in common: The first involves "developing curriculums with a comprehensive view that takes into account the students' environment and circles of life," which requires the integration of many factors – human, environmental, organizational, and technological. The second involves "belonging to a professional community and advancing it." This requires teachers possess a coherent, comprehensive professional identity relating to their practice as professional educators, see themselves belonging to a professional community, serve as a resource for knowledge, develop within the professional community, and advance it. The two topics appear in the same content group, apparently because the ability to plan complex educational processes demands a mature professional vision. Furthermore, both require a broad perception of place: in planning, teachers must take into account not only the student or students, but also their families, the faculty, and their own professional community. They must refer to aspects of the future of the students by developing transitional curriculums, and to their own future through mature professional long-term observation of teaching and the teaching profession as a whole. The skill that received the lowest percentage of respondents indicating high levels of self-efficacy in this content group and the entire questionnaire requires teachers work with the parents of their students, adopting an egalitarian collaborationist approach.

Results of the Qualitative Research
Analysis of the qualitative descriptions of the incidents – the interns' stories – that reveal teachers' self-efficacy uncovers a four-stage process with a common core: "independent surmounting of a crisis situation with a student as a means of developing self-efficacy."

Outset of the incident – severe difficulties with a student
The outset of the incidents described by 90 participants involved being faced with an acute crisis. For 72 of the participants, the crisis was connected to the behavior of students with special needs: usually aggressive and violent external behavior, but sometimes inward-directed. In some of the cases, the participants described ongoing situations such as, "At the start of the year a girl who didn't speak at all was assigned to my class. Initially I thought this was normal and she suffered from anxiety. But after a third of the year had passed she still was not talking"; "She has extreme moods evidenced by restlessness accompanied by tantrums and defying authority." The following is an additional example of an extreme ongoing situation:

> He would enter the classroom, sit backwards on the chair, and turn his back to me during the lesson. He would usually bang on the chair with his feet during the entire lesson so there would be background noise and he couldn't hear me. Of course, he doesn't speak or make eye contact. That's how he acts during every class and this continues during the whole lesson until the bell rings.

At other times the participants described acute, limited outbursts, sometimes accompanied by violence, as described in the following examples: "In the morning the girl arrived in a bad mood, and later there was an outburst. I understood that something odd was happening"; "About a month and a half ago one of my students reacted to me with blatant physical violence: kicking, throwing chairs, spitting." An acute incident is also presented in the following example:

> After we went up to the classroom – the student, a teaching assistant who's not usually part of our classroom staff, and I – the student sat in his chair and I approached him so I could talk to him. Suddenly, he had a temper tantrum and threw the chair and started to run after me. I started to run away, but immediately stopped. When I stopped the student was able to grasp my arms and bite me hard for the second time.

For 18 of the participants, the worst obstacle lay with the home environment making the situation more difficult:

"The environment doesn't believe in the child and doesn't provide support," and "The parents neglect the child and don't follow the teacher's instructions," and therefore, "With a family like that, the child won't get anywhere." According to one of the kindergarten teachers, "The home does not provide her basic needs and even harms her (the girl)." The participants sometimes tried to understand the origin of such environments, explaining them through the parent's emotional difficulties and distress: Parents who "are not capable of finding time to be full-time parents because of the constant stress of surviving day-to-day life," and as can be seen in the following examples:

> The social worker was involved in the case and warned me that these are protective parents who do not cooperate with the staff regarding the child's condition.
> . . . The problematic behavior of the parents affects the progress of the child and the ways we can treat her in the kindergarten . . . they can't hide information related to treating the child that could cause him harm.

Intervention by the teacher - independent, total, and intuitive
In response to the crises, the teachers intervened. We found three characteristics of the interventions. First, the teachers acted on their own. Except for one description, we found no assistance from other personnel during the intervention, and that the first person singular was used repeatedly in their descriptions – "I decided," "I initiated," I tried," "I empowered," etc. – which strengthened the theme of independent intervention. Second, the interventions were total and perceived as a kind of mission, as follows: "I made the child my baby"; "I decided to take the boy under my wing." Third, the interventions were not described as part of a coherent plan, but were intuitive acts, as follows: "It was in effect a plan of action, but absolutely intuitive"; "At that moment I made the decision"; and as described in the following quote:

> I should mention that they were conclusions I arrived at without consulting with any experts in psychology, but used my experience as a substitute teacher last year and being familiar with the children in various situations. I think consulting is an important tool. But in this case I relied on my own intuition.

The teachers described several types of intervention: gaining the students' trust, empowering them, advocating for them, and educating their parents. Thirty-one teachers described gaining their trust an important part of the intervention. This was, first of all, carried out through physical means associated with tone of voice, body language, and physical contact, as described here: "I held on to his hands because he continued hitting me and I spoke to him in quiet tones, although I was very upset," and in this quote:

> . . . physical proximity: the smile, a pat on the back that said everything would be fine, a hug. And I also made sure my body language matched what I wanted to convey. Because sometimes that's very hard to do. Inside, it was as if I felt I had no chance of success, but outside I showed something different.
> The students' trust was gained by providing them personal attention, encouragement, and acceptance; having private conversations with them; showing interest in their world; and giving them compliments and reassurance, as follows: "During the lessons I try to encourage her and give her personal attention and keep her as close to me as possible. I try in my relationships with the student to be gentle and accepting and not get into confrontations"; "I spoke to her all the time and demanded she answer me." The following is an additional example:
> Over time I tried to get close to him, I tried to gain his trust, I went to visit him at the after-school center, and you could say that I "discovered" him all over again. A polite boy with extreme difficulties in comprehension, and emotional problems that are even worse. I felt I must do something for him.

Twenty-one participants described the intervention as a process of empowering the student, for example: "Gradually, I involved him in all the activities in the class, I strengthened his position in the class," and as follows:

> I strengthened him in the class, I turned all of his mistakes into the biggest successes, but with some kind of personal truth. He wrote an incorrect answer on the board because he has no idea how to find information in a text, so I changed the question and explained that I got mixed up and that he had answered correctly . . .

Twenty participants intervened in a way that reflected advocacy for the student when contending with other faculty members. Frequently the teacher had to convince them that the child was suitable for the school, as follows: "The principal decided: 'The child does not belong in this school.' Being a highly motivated teacher, I resolved to prove her wrong." It sometimes took a lot of explaining and evidence to change the view of the faculty about the children, as described in the following quote:

> I try to explain to the teachers that the students are capable of joining school activities; they try to prove otherwise and remove them from social activities. My aim was to convince the teachers that my students are not "animals" and there is no need to be afraid of them; it's only that they have a short attention span sometimes.

In other instances, defending the students also included instructing the staff how to get them to learn, how to interest them and avoid disturbances. In addition to the instructions, reasons and explanations were provided, as follows:

> In the meeting I made it clear how to deal with the student by explaining the rationale. I explained, regarding removing the iPad from student's hands, that on second thought, it would be better to ask for it and wait for him to put it on the table. The reason for this is simple: He would interpret it as aggression, which in turn would lead to aggression on his part. I told this to the principal, who supported me 100%.

The interventions of 17 of the participants were manifested by guiding the parents and administering to them in order to advance the child, using concepts taken from psycho-therapy: detection and assessment, developing self-confidence, increasing motivation, setting limits, etc. One of the kindergarten teachers said: "As part of grappling with them during the year, I provided them tools and guidance so they could fulfill their roles." In the words of another kindergarten teacher, "That was . . . a basic level of providing guidance to the parents, and contributing to the student experiencing success at home as well." The guidance was meant to compel the parents to collaborate with the teachers and carry out their instructions and their demands, as follows: "For me, the most important thing is being in contact with the family. The parents don't listen to the professional personnel and do not cooperate. But my contact with them is daily and because of me they don't have any choice and do what I tell them to do." At times, the intervention also included recognizing the parents' difficulties and increasing their motivation to accept their child, sometimes by setting limits regarding child's relationship with the parents, as follows:

> As a result of my familiarity with psychotherapy, it was relatively easy for me to identify and diagnose the needs and difficulties of the parents. My main objective was finding a way to communicate with them by reducing my expectations from them, but setting clear limits to their involvement in areas I presented to them.

Intervention outcomes - complete turnaround of the initial situation
The teachers' interventions produced impressive outcomes that were manifested in changing the face of reality, including improvements both in the students' behavior and that of the parents. The students responded to personal contact with the teacher and began to cooperate with her, as described here: "After six months he overcame his fear and came with me to the petting corner, which shows we built a very close relationship that is very important for both of us"; "The next day he apologized to me. I gave him a hug and told him that I forgive him, that I know that it isn't like him to act that way, and that I understand him." The following is another example:

> I thought that despite the severe handicaps of the students I worked with and that progress comes in baby steps, you could clearly see the relationship that was established, as well as behavioral changes. I am able to connect to them and make them like me. . . . Creating such a relationship is not trivial for most of the students in the school.

Regarding the parents, as a result of the intervention, they began to become involved in the conduct of their children, to depend on the teachers and believe in them, as described here: "The student's parents are simple people and a significant change could be seen in them as well. They began coming to class meetings outside of school hours, writing in the notebook we used to communicate, and in general, to engage"; "In the beginning they were a bit worried, they didn't have confidence in what I said . . . slowly, slowly they began to trust me more and cooperated with me."

Often the intervention outcomes were almost miraculous and were described as a kind of reversal of the situation, as in the following examples: "The child became a success story and a model for the whole class"; "From that point there was a tremendous change in his behavior"; "After the talk we had she entered the classroom and her behavior was completely normal; "And today we are all reaping the fruits, especially the boy."
Sometimes the magnitude of the change astounded everyone, including the teacher, as seen in the following example:

> They were all following what I was saying and were fascinated . . . And my principal was amazed . . . Of course, after that I went to her office; she got up from her chair and hugged me and told me she was really happy to see how important it is to me that the children acquire the content and she feels I am really always on the alert and that I believe everything must fit and be in place . . . and that she very much appreciates how much I care and how much I devote [to the child]. Even though she never asked.

Ramifications of the incident - dramatic changes in the teacher's sense of efficacy

As a consequence of the incidents, the teachers gained a strong sense of professional efficacy. This was linked mainly to a sense of power and control. The word "power" appears in the teachers' stories 13 times. Sense of power and control was mainly apparent in their perceived capacity to shape the students' character; to influence their lives, either directly or indirectly – by shaping their environments – and to change them; as in the following examples: "The special education teacher can advance the students and change their lives"; "I am like a guide dog for the blind." Sometimes the teacher would be described as the source of life for the student, as in the following example:

> A good teacher is like rain in the desert. We are in need of good teachers. The role of the teacher is very important and far-reaching and can change the life of a student forever. A teacher can be a positive example for the student and the latter can progress and succeed because of her. . . . The students are like the desert and the teachers are like rain.

Sense of power is also reflected in the ability of teachers to believe in their students, to be stubborn and not to give up on them when others have done so, as in the following quote:

> This experience taught me what the power of the teacher is – the teacher sometimes finds herself in a situation in which it is easy to give up, all the more so when the child's parents give up; but I learned to be stubborn.

Power also lies in the teachers' self-control under difficult circumstances and the ability to feel affection and empathy for the students in situations that ostensively call for an angry response. The following quote is a good illustration of this:

> I learned to find my inner strength and see the child without relating to my anger at him. It is very easy in such situations to breakdown and be angry at the child when he disturbs the class and yells, and to even let him get away with it. However, the teacher must know that the best interests of the child come first and to eliminate those feelings when they arise.

The capacity for self-control was described as integral to the professionalism of the special education teacher, as follows: "I felt that because I have knowledge and sensitivity in the area of special education, I could try and show empathy for him and respond with forgiveness and patience," as well as in the following example:

> I believe that the foundation is a sense of security and empathy that the special education teacher provides the student, that is, an emotional base. Emotional and psycho-therapeutic skills that we as special education teachers must demonstrate during our work, I believe, distinguish the special education teacher from a regular teacher.
> Only two participants indicated high efficacy related to organizing and leading the staff:
> After I reached those insights myself, I convened a staff meeting. It required I use my management skills. After I made the importance of the discussion clear to the principal, she approved holding the meeting during work hours.
> I seems that the incident, with all its difficulties, made all of the team reassess. This attests to my organizational and leadership abilities, and above all, my educational approach and the responsibility I feel for each and every child in the classroom.

Discussion
The findings of the quantitative section of this research indicated that a higher percentage of respondents had strong self-efficacy with regard to specific one-dimensional topics that represent the traditional core of special education and the knowledge base acquired during years of teacher training. These are issues that may involve social desirability and the conventional image of the special education teacher who welcomes human diversity, is familiar with the law and policies, has an ethical approach to the job, and is highly competent to work in extreme human conditions. A lower percentage of the respondents showed high levels of self-efficacy regarding coping with multidimensional issues that are complex and require innovation in the work of the teacher, as well as collaboration and professional maturity. They include the need for teachers to construct their identity within the professional community, develop within its framework, and work for its advancement.

The findings of the qualitative section of the research indicated that most of the beginning teachers perceived that their ability to successfully cope with extreme behavior of an individual student represented the main component of their self-efficacy. Sense of efficacy was associated with a dialectic process that began with encounters with extreme behavior; continued with the teachers' struggle to remedy the situation, assisted by their personal intuition and resources; and ended in a radical change in the situation accompanied by a very high sense of efficacy.

The results of the quantitative section are in keeping with those of the qualitative section in that in both a strong sense of efficacy to handle extreme events related to an individual student was found among more participants. In addition, a strong sense of efficacy related to collaboration with staff members and parents as well as to planning and managing complex learning processes in a variety of learning environments requiring wide-ranging innovative knowledge from the teachers was either found among fewer participants or not at all.

Diversity was referred to by a number of respondents. In the first skill content group in the quantitative section, which described acceptance and support of diversity in theory, a high percentage of respondents with strong self-efficacy was found. In contrast, in the last two content groups of skills – the fifth and sixth – in which implementation of diversity is put into practice, a lower percentage of respondents indicated a strong sense of efficacy. Furthermore, in the qualitative section of the questionnaire the issue was completely absent. We can explain this by saying that because human diversity is a major topic taught in teacher training courses (Israeli Ministry of Education, 2005-2006), when the teachers were asked about it as a theoretical subject, they indicated a strong sense of efficacy. In practice, however, it is apparently not an integral part of their work and so was not mentioned even once in answer to the open question. In the closed questions, when implementation was implicitly referred to, the respondents did not list it as an issue relating to sense of efficacy.

In the qualitative section of the questionnaire, collaborating with partners on the job was listed in the fourth content group, but in the quantitative section, the work environment of the beginning teachers' stories was described as devoid of partners. When partners were mentioned, their perceived roles were as subordinates required to carry out the instructions of the teacher regarding work with students with special needs or to express admiration for the dramatic changes that took place in the students. We believe that these findings indicate lack of implementation of one of the innovative foundations in special education – collaborative work (Murawski, 2012).

It is also interesting how the participants referred to the parents: In the quantitative section of the questionnaire, a relatively high percentage of the respondents felt they were highly competent in understanding, accepting, and respecting family diversity; understanding the limitations of the individuals and their families; and taking into account the family when preparing the curriculum. In contrast, the lowest percentage of participants in the entire questionnaire considered themselves highly competent in involving the parents of the students with special needs in all aspects of education. In keeping with this, in the qualitative section of the questionnaire, the parents were described as being "patients" of the teacher, requiring guidance and instruction. This finding indicates, in our opinion, a non-egalitarian approach, which does not consider parents full partners in the work of the teacher. This contradicts the accepted view today of the parents as full and even senior partners in the teamwork required in special education (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2010).

The research findings indicate that perceived efficacy of teachers is tied mainly to the traditional dimensions of the special education teaching profession. The more innovative dimensions are not usually perceived as contributing to high sense of efficacy, and it seems they have not been assimilated in beginning teachers' perceptions of their roles in special education. Aspects related to teaching itself, such as complex teaching in diverse teaching situations that require deep-seated knowledge of the discipline, as well as those tied to its organizational dimension, like collaboration with a variety of professional personnel, are also missing (Eisenman, et al., 2011).

From the quantitative section of the research, we learned that perceived self-efficacy among beginning teachers is mainly related to sense of power: the power to act in extreme crises and transform crises that seem impossible to overcome into success stories; to do the "unbelievable"; to act alone and succeed where others have failed thanks to personal traits such as "perseverance," "stubbornness," and "motivation," and through "struggle" and personal war, and "a connection with the language of psycho-therapy"; the power to take total responsibility over extreme cases and make them a life mission for the teacher; to influence others, change the reality of life, and even facilitate life. Strong perceived self-efficacy is also associated with the power to exercise self-control, to defend the weak, and to change perceptions in the environment – those of peers, professional personnel, and even parents – towards the student, and the power to instruct and guide teachers and parents.

Importance of the Research
This study examined perceived ability to cope with the requirements of the job as it was recently formulated by the most important special education association in the world, the CEC, which influences policymakers around the

world regarding regulation, legislation, and the roles of professional personnel. The study allowed us to examine the professional baggage beginning teachers bring with them to the field and its suitability to the requirements of the role recognized around the world today, to point to areas that should be strengthened during teacher training, and to aspects of the job that should be added to the training of special education teachers in Israel.

These include organizational aspects of the work, like collaboration with faculty teams; guiding and leading them (Lamar-Dukes & Duhes, 2005); and planning, implementation, and evaluation of teaching that must respond to a wide range of human diversity. These aspects require a wide range of knowledge, whether disciplinary or inter-disciplinary; familiarity with pedagogic innovations, such as educational technology (Murawski, 2012); full collaboration with parents stemming from an egalitarian approach (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2010); and finally, the cultivation of professional identity as a teacher who learns and evolves within a professional community, contributes to it, and is benefited by it.

Research Limitations
This study was carried out in one teacher training college in Israel in the secular Jewish sector. All Israeli teacher training colleges are similar in nature, but there very well may be slightly different characteristics in colleges that cater to other sectors, such as the Arab sector, the religious Jewish sector, etc. In this case, generalization of the findings over all special education trainees may be limited.

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