

Hagit Mishkin¹, Ilanit Avraham²

¹ Mofet Institute, Tel Aviv, Israel
ORCID 0009-0004-4930-0319

² Efrata College of Education, Jerusalem, Israel
ORCID 0000-0002-1996-3056

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35464/1642-672X.PS.2024.1.04>

How Ethiopian-descended Israeli Novice Kindergarten Teachers, Perceive Their Integration Process into the Education System

ABSTRACT: Kindergarten teachers' first year of internship is typically even more intense than that of schoolteachers. The challenges faced often become more complicated and difficult for those novice kindergarten teachers who are people of color and/or members of other minority groups, such as Ethiopian-descended Israelis.

The aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of Ethiopian-descended Israeli kindergarten teachers regarding their experience job searching and their first year of work in the field.

Nine such novice kindergarten teachers were interviewed for this purpose. The interviews were analyzed by using a qualitative-phenomenological method. The findings revealed instances of implicit racism from team members, supervisors and students' parents, as well as interviewees' coping methods and their sense of purpose and achievement in dismantling racist stereotypes. These findings necessitate a re-examination of the needs of Ethiopian-descended kindergarten teacher in the job search stage and in their early years of teaching, as well as relevant adaptations to the training and mentoring programs available, in order to enable these teachers' successful integration into and retention within the education system.

KEY WORDS: Education System, Integration, Ethiopian descent teachers.

¹ Hagit Mishkin was murdered by Hamas terrorists who invaded Israel on 7.10.23.

Novice Teachers: Difficulties, Perseverance, and Attrition

The transition from student to independent educator involves a process of developing a personal and a professional identity and becoming integrated into an educational environment (Schuck et al., 2018). The first years of teaching are critical for novice teachers, as they face numerous challenges. Moreover, the way they handle challenges during their first year of field work is a key determinant in their decision whether to remain teachers (Sözen, 2018). The research discusses the “praxis shock”, “reality shock” or “transition shock” experienced by these novice teachers (Çakmak et al., 2019; Correa et al., 2015; Senom et al., 2013), as well as their self-definition of “being an immigrant in a foreign country (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). The novice teachers report on feeling loneliness, discomfort and fear (Maskit, 2013). According to prior research, novices need to find strategies to adapt to a new professional environment, interact with their colleagues, their students and their students’ parents, efficiently organize their time, manage their class, organize their lessons, etc. (Çakmak et al., 2018).

Having their difficulties ignored and their need to belong unsatisfied are the main causes cited by novice teachers for leaving the profession (Maskit, 2013). In the research literature, attrition or intentional leaving are described through several images and terms. Rinke (2008) describes a process of large-scale attrition that is not sufficiently addressed in the public sphere or in the education system as a “silent crisis”. Another pattern is migration or drifting (Dupriez et al., 2016; Ingersoll, 2003), in which teachers do not leave the system entirely but move from one school to the next. In addition, a “revolving door” phenomenon is described, involving a high turnover of teachers with little experience (Ingersoll, 2001).

Novice Kindergarten Teachers

Whereas much research attention has been given to the induction stage of novice schoolteachers worldwide (Ingersoll et al., 2021; Kearney, 2014), studies focusing on the induction process of novice kindergarten teachers (NKTs) are limited, despite the different work tasks and contexts of both groups of teachers. For example, unlike the smaller frameworks in which NKTs work, schoolteachers are placed in large organizations under the supervision of administrators of different levels. The induction year is particularly intense for KT, who, in fact, run the kindergarten alone. KTs encounter high job

demands and heavy responsibility at work making the profession a stressful one (Cumming, 2017). Sources of KTs stress are varied, including the need to make adaptations and curriculum changes, excessive over-time work, management problems associated with student misbehavior and large class sizes, and non-teaching tasks (Tsai et al., 2006). In addition to caring for young children and tending to their physical, emotional, and educational needs, KTs are also the ‘managers’ or ‘leaders’ of their kindergarten units, engaged in multiple tasks: lectureship, storytelling, leading group discussion, traffic direction, organizing plays, file clerking, management and nurturance (Moshel & Berkovich, 2020).

Although most NKTs experience difficulties as they enter the teaching profession, these difficulties are greater and more intense for NKTs of Ethiopian descent, a minority group of people of color whose ethnic background differs from that of the majority group in Israel.

Ethiopian-descended Jews in Israel

Israel’s diverse population has a strong representation of first, second and third-generation Jewish immigrants from across the globe. While many immigrant communities have faced issues due to cultural differences and discrimination, Ethiopian-descended Jews have also faced unique issues due to their skin color and origin (Kass & Reingold, 2013), which added to the emotional and psychological challenges of migration. Thus, although official policies prohibit discrimination, Ethiopian-descended Jewish citizens are over-represented in the lowest socio-economic strata and report that they often confront implicit or explicit expressions of racism (Abu 2017; Semyonov et al. 2015).

Moreover, they suffer from over-policing, and often experience implicit or explicit expressions of racism and discrimination in education and employment, their very Jewishness doubted by the Israeli religious establishment (Palmor, 2016; Semyonov et al., 2015).

Racism

Racism is a commonly found ideology among the majority group, enabling it to justify its domination of minority groups by cultural or biological differences (Wilson, 1994, p. 14). A useful theoretical framework for analyzing and understanding these phenomena in Western countries is the Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT asserts that, despite condemnations of explicit racism and declarations regarding policies that are “equal” and “color blind”, racism is still widely spread, mostly implicit, and sometimes accepted as normative behavior

(Bell, 1995, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013). As for education, CRT posits that racism has become so deeply ingrained that it is often invisible, but can explain the difficulties facing people of color within educational institutions (Bell, 2018; Carter-Andrews et al., 2019).

While CRT was developed, conceived, and primarily applied in the context of people of color in the United States, its insights and the analytical tools it provides can be applied to other contexts and situations. In the Israeli context, CRT has been used to guide research on Bedouin Arabs and their perceptions of their treatment by Israeli society (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2017), as well as research on Ethiopian-descended residents of minority neighborhoods in Israeli towns, focusing specifically on “micro-aggressions”.

Ethiopian-descended Teachers in Israel

The underrepresentation of people of color and low-SES minority communities among teaching staff is a prevalent phenomenon (Atchison et al., 2017; Carver-Thomas, 2018; Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). The representation of Ethiopian-descended educators at Israeli schools, for example, remains staggeringly low at only 0.4%, corresponding to merely a quarter of their community’s share of the population. In an attempt to address this issue, the Israeli Ministry of Education (MoE) initiated the “TESFA” (‘hope’ in Amharic) program, in partnership with MOFET Institute and Merchavim Institute. TESFA provides both student teachers and novice teachers with support and skills in three main areas: academic learning, educational leadership and multiculturalism (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2015). In addition, financial aid is made available to Ethiopian-descended student teachers, to higher education institutions so they can provide their students with additional support, and to schools that recruit Ethiopian-descended teachers. As a result, the number of Ethiopian-descended teachers entering and persevering in the education system has more than doubled in the last decade. At the same time, this number is still lower than the rate in the Israeli population (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2020).

In recent years, several studies on the integration of teachers of Ethiopian descent in the Israeli education system have been conducted. The findings show that, like all novice teachers, they also experienced difficulties at the start of their career. However, the most salient finding was the difficulties they faced when confronted with racist perspectives and discrimination (Brenner & Avisar, 2017; Tennbaum-Domonovich et al., 2018). These studies revealed these teachers’ sense of being unfairly treated due to implicit as well as explicit racist attitudes of principals, teachers and parents, and emphasized

the importance of management and staff support as a key factor contributing to their perseverance.

The studies were conducted among teachers who were already integrated into the education system when the data were collected, and made no distinction between schoolteachers and KT of Ethiopian descent. The current study, however, focuses specifically on KT of Ethiopian descent in their first year of work in this profession. Its goal is to further shed light on the integration of NKT of color into the education system. Our research questions are therefore: Is racism experienced in this context, from NKTs' own viewpoint, and if so, how? How do they react to the difficulties they experience? Exploring these questions will provide the basis for integration programs better suited to the needs of Ethiopian-descended NKTs, raising awareness of and mitigating implicit biases.

Study Method

Participants: Nine female NKTs of Ethiopian descent who graduated from teacher education colleges with a B.A. and a teaching certificate, and participated in the Tesfa program during their studies. Participants were approached on social media, and all agreed to participate in the study. There are no authority relationships between the interviewers and interviewees. The study was approved by the ethics committee of the MOFET Institute. At the time of the interviews, all the participants were employed in diverse types of kindergartens (religious and non-religious) and geographic areas in Israel. The participants gave informed consent for the study and the subsequent use of their interviews. All names and identifying details have been changed or deleted.

Study tool: The qualitative-phenomenological approach was used in this study to enable us to learn about the topic under investigation by observing a certain phenomenon, while focusing on the subjective experiences of several people who experienced it (Creswell & Poth, 2017). According to this approach, the events that people undergo are meaningful experiences for them that are of greater importance than any interpretation or theory, and are perceived as significant and valid knowledge. Any objective understanding is based on a subjective perception, and the study's goal is to reach the core meaning of the what the participants experienced. The first stage is to describe and analyze the essence of a given phenomenon experienced by the interviewees, and then later to propose an interpretation about the overall significance of the phenomenon. Our study tool was a semi-structured interview, that was

conducted according to the guidelines, as well as topics that arose during the interview. Among the subjects discussed were: job hunting, transition from student to NKT, absorption into an educational framework, success events versus difficulties faced, and ways of coping. The questionnaire did not include questions about racism. In addition, the interviewees were not asked about their ethnic background to enable them to talk freely about their absorption and integration processes. were

Analysis of interviews: The main content categories were extracted from the interviews by each author separately. The authors then compared the categories they identified and listed the sub-categories. Three main themes were identified: 1. The interviewees' description of their induction year. 2. The interviewees' perception about how the surrounding majority group (staff, inspector, students' parents) referred to their ethnic background and skin-color; 3. Ways of dealing with difficulties or with explicit or implicit racism. The initial findings were presented to staff members of the Tesfa program, some of whom are of Ethiopian descent, for review and comments, in order to validate them in a wider, multi-cultural context.

Findings

Analysis of the interviews showed that the induction and integration process of NKTs of Ethiopian descent is complex and multi-dimensional, and that internal and external success-promoting forces are at play against hindering forces. When presenting the findings in this section, we refer to the Ethiopian-descended NKTs' perceptions of how others (e.g., supervisors, students' parents) saw their ethnic background and skin color as a hindering force, their feeling of loneliness, and their description of the gap between their training and the first year as a KTs. We also present ways in which these NKTs coped with these forces during the induction and at work, when faced with implicit and explicit racism. We have included direct quotes from the interviewees in this section, some of which are representative, and others are thought-provoking. The quotes reveal the unique reality of Ethiopian-descended KTs.

Kindergarten teachers' perception of the absorption and integration process

With only one exception, the interviewees all related that their starting point when looking for employment and during the absorption process differed from that of the other interns and NKTs, because of society's approach to members of the Ethiopian community.

Supervisors and students' parents' attitudes to teacher's ethnic background and skin color: Some of the interviewees said that their skin color prevented them from being offered a teaching position, even at the interview stage. Some sample quotes in this respect: "Some supervisors [interviewing for positions] are deterred as soon as they see me"; "When she [the supervisor I had the job interview with] realized it's me that she spoke with on the phone, she got confused and started stuttering... 'I didn't know... your last name [is not Ethiopian]... I didn't know...'"

Many of the interviewees described the attitude of the students' parents as discriminatory: for example, "[One parent said:] 'Are you the new kindergarten assistant?!' It was clear to him [the parent] that there is no way I am the kindergarten teacher"; "Are you the permanent teacher or the substitute kindergarten teacher?"; "They point at me and whisper and call me 'the Ethiopian' as if I don't have a name." A discriminatory and suspicious message from the students' parents emerges from these quotes. This attitude came up many times in parents' response during their initial meetings with Ethiopian-descended NKTs.

Ruth described her first meeting with one of the mothers:

She approached me without missing a beat and asked me where I studied, what my experience was, as if I were in a job interview. She didn't even apologize. I'm not sure she would have done that to another kindergarten teacher. There is nothing I can do for white people, they only trust white people.

Massaret summed up her perception that parents who express racism are an ongoing and recurrent phenomenon that will always exist:

It makes no difference that you work and they know you and you are good at your job, your skin color will always hold you back... It does not go away, whether you like it or not, they will always look at you as being different. There is nothing you can do about it. As far as they are concerned, you are not like them.

Parental attitudes such as these can have a devastating impact on NKTs of color, and are evidence of ongoing and recurrent racism, which is sometimes even made explicit. Orly's story illustrates this. Although she started to work at a kindergarten, she was transferred to a different position when a new set of parents joined the community and pushed for her to be removed from her previous position. In her view, it was her skin color and background that once again became factors influencing her professional stability and her supervisor's attitude in choosing not to fight for her:

After four months that I was working, a whole group of young, Ashkenazi [Israeli majority group] parents moved here, and then their children enrolled to my kindergarten, and then [the supervisor] told me that she has to transfer me, but I have been teaching here for a few months already. However, she wanted peace and quiet and gave in to their demand. I was alone with no one on my side, it was just me in the kindergarten with no one to back me up... fight on my behalf. And she did not protect me.

The interviewees' comments may be summed up by Miri, who works as a substitute for a KT on maternity leave:

There's nothing to be done, that's the first thing they [the parents] see. Even though I don't have an accent, I'm a native of the country, I have a master's degree, and still a white teacher automatically has an advantage over me".

From the words of the interviewees, we can learn about their feeling of loneliness: "You have to deal on your own with a father [of a student] who patronizes you just because you're the 'wrong' color"; "it's not easy to be the only one who looks different".

Dorit described her integration as an NKT compared to that of her white friend, who is a novice schoolteacher:

No one really prepares you for how to deal alone with everything. In college, you study and experiment, but you are always accompanied by friends and lecturers. When you become a kindergarten teacher, you realize that there is no one else but you, and everything depends on you. It was a complete shock at first. I compare it to my friend who is a schoolteacher. There you consult with other teachers, with the principal and the counselor. Besides, [they] have a break and a separate teacher's lounge. And on top of all that, you are new in the system, young and Ethiopian. The beginning was really hard for me.

The gap between the way the NKT perceives herself and her abilities and the way the students' parents perceive and treat her also came up in the words of Felagush:

I sat for hours and invested in preparing 'learning center' activities. The children had an amazing experience. The next day, Erez's mother told me she heard it was beautiful and he enjoyed it, and she asked where I got it [the activities' lesson plan] from. I told her I made it myself. She looked at me like, 'Are you playing around with me?' No matter how I tried to explain to her that it was me [who

developed the activities], that I am creative and have the knowledge and the talent, I saw she didn't believe that someone that looks like me can do that.

The interviewees described how the lack of diversity in the kindergarten and implicit racist assumptions about their abilities sometimes affect their emotional, intellectual, and motivational capabilities. An example of that was provided by Rinat:

It is not easy to come [to work] every day and get the feeling that they would have preferred a white kindergarten teacher... that they feel that their children are paying a price because I am less professional... You know that when you make the slightest mistake, [your]supervisor won't back you up either. So, in the end, you ask yourself if it's even worth continuing to struggle and to make an effort, since you won't be appreciated in any case.

Coping Strategies

The interviewees described the coping strategies they applied during the period they were looking for a teaching position and as they integrated into the education system, as well as when they confronted racism. Several of the NKTs interviewed emphasized that their sense of resilience and ability to respond calmly to insults increased and developed as they continued to face racism and discrimination. All interviewees noted that they took responsibility for their reactions and practiced agency in refusing to accept such treatment. They actively chose whether or not to respond, as well as the manner of their response, which in many cases was to increase their internal motivation for successfully achieving their goals despite the challenges.

Avoidance: Most of the interviewees described that they chose not to respond and confront the students' parents. This choice was a conscious action to avoid confrontation or harm: *"I'm not ready to accept it... It's hers [her problem], she's not putting this poison into me"; "I see that she [a student's mother] is trying to make a fuss, and I'm on my own, but deciding to not let her drag me into this."*

Some interviewees choose to stay silent in order not to affirm the racial stereotype that they are violent and/or uncivilized. An example can be found in Massaret's description:

Everything should be done wisely, it's important to stay calm. We must not reinforce what the media shows, that we are violent and criminals. I hold myself back and remain absolutely professional. Even if my parents are uneducated like you claim [the student's parent] claim, they taught me good manners.

Resilience: Ruthy and Tamar demonstrated resilience when faced with discrimination, and showed agency in choosing not to let it influence or harm them. Tamar refused to be harmed by the discrimination and racist comments she had experienced. One example of this is her description of how she had coped with a supervisor's concerns about placing a KT of Ethiopian descent:

She told me, 'At first I was a bit hesitant.' So I told her: 'Listen, I certainly do not feel my skin color.' It should not be an issue at all. The minute we [people of color] allow it to be an issue, we will be harming ourselves even more, and not them [the racists] ... It will make us feel bad, and less important. Why should we let them do this to us? Why?

Ruthy also chooses not to see the connection between the discrimination and unpleasantness she experienced and her ethnic background as a member of a racial minority group.

I am an individual, I do not see these aspects. I think that every person, in every profession, in every place, experiences difficulties. No one has a smooth start. I do not go in the direction of thinking that it is because I am an Ethiopian. I prefer not to think that way, and I also don't teach my children to think that way.

Efficacy and self-evaluation: The interviewees shared their thoughts when faced with racism, and discussed the inner strengths that supported them when confronting external, weakening voices. In the words of Felagush:

On the whole, I believed in my abilities... I saw the other kindergarten teachers they hired, and not that I thought I was better than them, but I certainly was no worse than them. I managed the kindergarten rather well.

Agency: At the same time, most of the NKTs interviewed appear to have focused on the children in their care regardless of how they were treated by the parents: "I strengthen myself, I know what I'm doing and the most important thing is the child"; "I make a separation, it's not his fault that his parents behave and think like that about me, I am committed to him."

Most of the interviewees believed that the children will be the catalysts for change in the parents' perceptions. For many of them, this proved to be the case, as they described the change in the parents' perceptions throughout their first year as NKTs. A good example of this is Orly's anecdote of the attitudinal change in a student's mother after the mother's attendance of the kindergarten's annual trip:

She saw my attitude towards him [her child] ... how I manage to calm him down even when she didn't succeed... She understood the relationship I have with him, and how much he trusts me. At the end of the trip, she called and apologized for what she had said against me and my ethnicity at the beginning of the year.

Troya works in a kindergarten where there are mainly white children. She also described a change in the parents' attitude, and the reasons for it:

The change happened because of them [the children]. They love me, I mean everything to them, and it affects the parents. One mother told me that they talked about beauty, and her daughter said that I am the most beautiful woman in the world [laughs]. Who would have believed that a blonde girl with blue eyes would think that black is beautiful...

The interviewees viewed this change as part of their role as educators. Dorit was able to sum it up: "You know what my greatest achievement here is? That they finally see me as a human being." The NKTs interviewed responded to overt or covert references to their ethnicity or skin color made by parents and supervisors either with silent, determined internal resistance, or with an explicit response rejecting this attitude. They chose to believe in their abilities and strive for achievement.

Discussion

This study aimed to gain an understanding of how NKTs of Ethiopian descent perceive their process of integration into the education system. Understanding this process is a complex task, due to discrimination and exclusion based on skin-color which is sometimes implicit, and often unintentional and without the awareness of those causing it. NKTs' transition into a kindergarten involves multiple tasks, and their need for support from various sources is crucial. To ensure smooth and effective integration, the support resources available to these teachers are their colleagues, students' parents and their supervisors from the Ministry of Education (Fonsén & Ukkonen-Mikkola, 2019). At the same time, they need emotional support, as they are constructing their professional identity, and developing their sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2013) and motivation to remain in the job (Guo et al., 2011).

The study findings show that NKTs' integration into the education system involves experiencing and dealing with attitudes of racism and discrimination from the people around them in their professional environment, based on their

skin color and ethnic background. At the same time, also they were essentially on their own and new to the system, the interviewees did not act as victims. They defied the those who chose to treat them differently based on their color and ethnicity, doing so in a variety of ways, using different coping strategies

Ethiopian-descended NKTs' perceptions of the implicit (and sometimes explicit) racism they encountered align with the principles of CRT. CRT highlights social perceptions that attribute innate superiority or skills to the white majority group, and criticizes these perceptions. It also consistent with studies that found that a dark skin color leads to discrimination by general society and is perceived as negative, inferior and weak (Dahan-Kalev & Maor, 2015; Kogan & Bae., 2020). Moreover, CRT challenges that the notion that the establishment and society at large oppose racism and practice equality. Similarly, while Israeli society considers itself a multi-cultural one, studies that examined racism within it in light of CRT discovered explicit and implicit expressions of racism towards Israelis of Ethiopian descent (Abu-Rabia-Queder 2017, 2019; Shoshana, 2016).

The current study's findings are also consistent with the literature about the difficulties of minority-group teachers when it comes to integrating into the education system (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Grooms et al., 2021, Vargas, 2020), despite the resources invested by the system for this purpose. This study calls for increasing awareness of racial discrimination in this context, and proposes a critical stance on the built-in perception in Israel's education-system and in society in general, based on CRT. Despite good intentions and efforts by policymakers, training programs and the education system at large, the NKTs' descriptions bring into doubt the perception of Israel as a multi-cultural society in which all groups have equal access to resources, employment and status. The Ethiopian-descended NKTs' loneliness in the face of racist statements by those around them was palpable throughout their interviews. The feeling of loneliness as a novice kindergarten teacher is consistent with former research about novice kindergarten teachers regardless of ethnicity (Moshel & Berkovich, 2020), yet it is exacerbated by belonging to a racial minority group. Research on people of color reports that they sense lower levels of belonging (Smith & Silva, 2011), and previous studies specifically showed that minority-group teachers experience discrimination and separatism because of their different skin color or background (Grooms et al., 2021; Vargas, 2020).

However, the interviewees did not take a passive stance, despite the difficulties they experienced. Rather, they rejected and opposed displays of racism, refusing to give in to this reality. Moreover, they acted to change this

reality and find ways to realize their goals and abilities, and most of them felt that they succeeded in doing so. This finding is consistent with the definition of agency – the ability to choose not to accept the decisions made by others, but rather to set goals and act to achieve them, while displaying active initiative (Bandura, 2018). It also demonstrates resilience – the ability to cope with, learn from, overcome and change as a result of difficulty or distress (Grotberg, 2003). The interviewees' coping strategies are consistent with those found in the research literature about teachers who persevere in teaching, about self-efficacy and self-evaluation (Hong, 2012). Teachers who have high levels of self-efficacy tend to experience high levels of resilience (Beltman et al., 2011). They feel more competent in their jobs, more successful in their roles, and more satisfied with their jobs (Tan & Chou, 2018). The findings of the current study are also consistent with those about resilience, confrontation, or high achieving as coping strategies with implicit and explicit racism (Fleming et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2021), as well as with studies that examined the connection between resilience and minority groups.

The study participants described that they had to work harder than their non-minority peers in order to prove themselves, their value and their worth, and to dispel negative stereotypes. Motivation among NKTs of Ethiopian descent was found to be related to their kindergarten students' behavior, satisfaction, and academic achievement. Proactivity on the NKTs' part leads to a stronger sense of contribution to changes in the perceptions community. This echoes research regarding the need for African Americans to work harder to overcome negative stereotypes and prove their worth (Sue et al., 2008; Nadal, 2011), the impact of student achievement on teachers' motivation (Mihaljević Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019), and NKTs' sense of proactivity (Kaplan, 2022).

The current study involved a small sample of female teachers, women who are part of the education system. All of them reported as having experienced difficulties in integrating into this system. Also, the gender of the participants requires some consideration. Kahan-Strawczynski et al. (2010), found that adolescent girls of Ethiopian descent are more successful in their studies and in social integration than their male counterparts. The girls tend to create a supportive social network for themselves and have greater success in transitioning between different social environments, despite the changes involved. Despite these limitations, the study findings may indicate the reason why many Ethiopian-descended graduates of KT training programs do not even enter the education system. It is possible that those who opted out could not cope with the difficulties they met during the practical training stage, unlike the interviewees who were able to overcome them as they did the challenges

met during their first year in a real work setting. It is also possible that it wasn't by choice, and that they simply were not successful in their job search due to implicit biases such as those demonstrated by the interviewees' quotes.

Future research could focus on graduates who are not part of the education system, to try and identify the factors that led to their non-integration. We suggest examining the similarities and differences between how they perceive their entry into the profession, how those in their professional environment treated them, and how they coped with difficulties or barriers as compared with the perceptions of the interviewees in the current study. We also propose a future study that would take examine the perception of novice teachers of Ethiopian descent alongside those of their mentors, to reveal multiple perspectives of the same situations by different actors and potential misunderstandings or underlying factors.

The current study contributes to our understanding of the reasons for the lack of appropriate representation for Ethiopian Israelis among NKTs. Increasing this representation and thereby Israeli students' exposure to teachers of Ethiopian descent as positive role models is crucial in order to combat racist attitudes and create a better future for all. An additional contribution of the current study is in demonstrating the application of CRT to the Israeli context, reinforcing our awareness and understanding that it is the system that absorbs these teachers that is responsible for changing the the dynamics of discrimination and racism.

Conclusions and recommendations: Early dropout, high turnover rates, and an acute shortage of KTs in Israel pose a real threat to preschool children's education and development and should not be underestimated. Guided by the findings of this research, early childhood educators and policymakers can plan support schemes specifically tailored for NKTs of Ethiopian descent, suitable to the local needs and the community.

Teacher educators should be made aware of the notion that a sense of efficacy is the main support resource NKTs draw on as they navigate their way in the kindergarten. Teacher educators should initiate courses and workshops that will gradually enhance Ethiopian-descended NKTs' sense of autonomy, wellbeing, and motivation – leading to a high sense of self-efficacy, as early as possible in the teacher education and training stage. To effectively support these NKTs in their transition into teaching, induction programs must meet both their professional and personal needs. Moreover, supervisors, as representatives of the education system, have a major influence on how teachers of Ethiopian descent integrate into it and how they cope with difficulties in this process. Efforts should be made to ensure that these supervisors identify the strong

points and contribution of the Ethiopian-descended teachers to the school or kindergarten and to society in general.

References

- Abu-Rabia-Queder, S. (2017). The paradox of professional marginality among Arab-Bedouin women. *Sociology*, 51(5), 1084–1100.
- Abu-Rabia-Queder, S. (2019). The paradox of diversity in the Israeli academia: Reproducing white Jewishness and national supremacy. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 25(2), 231–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2019.1694502>
- Atchison, B., Diffey, L., Rafa, A., & Sarubbi, M. (2017). *Equity in education: Key questions to consider*. Education Commission of the States.
- Bandura, A. (2013). Regulative function of perceived self-efficacy. In: *Personnel selection and classification* (pp. 279–290). Psychology Press.
- Bandura, A. (2018). Toward a psychology of human agency: Pathways and reflections. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 13(2), 130–136.
- Bell, D.A. (1995). Who's afraid of critical race theory. *University of Illinois Law Review*, 4, 893–910.
- Bell, D. (2018). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. Hachette B. and Blackstone Audio.
- Beltman, S., Mansfield, C., & Price, A. (2011). Thriving not just surviving: A review of research on teacher resilience. *Educational Research Review*, 6(3), 185–207.
- Brenner, R & Avisar, N. (2017). Teachers of Ethiopian-descent in the education system; the story of consistent Underrepresentation. *Giloy Daat*, 12, 63–92. (in Hebrew).
- Çakmak, M., Gündüz, M., & Emstad, A.B. (2019). Challenging moments of novice teachers: Survival strategies developed through experiences. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 49(2), 147–162.
- Carter Andrews, D.J., Castro, E., Cho, C.L., Petchauer, E., Richmond, G., & Floden, R. (2019). Changing the narrative on diversifying the teaching workforce: A look at historical and contemporary factors that inform recruitment and retention of teachers of color. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 70(1), 6–12.
- Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color*. Learning Policy Institute.
- Correa, J.M., Martínez-Arbelaiz, A., & Aberasturi-Apraiz, E. (2015). Post-modern reality shock: Beginning teachers as sojourners in communities of practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 48, 66–74.
- Creswell, J.W., & Poth, C.N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five traditions* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Cumming, T. (2017). Early childhood educators' well-being: An updated review of the literature. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 45, 583–593.
- Dahan-Kalev, H.D., & Maor, M. (2015). Skin color stratification in Israel revisited. *Journal of Levantine Studies*, 5, 9–33.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2013). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Temple University Press.
- Dupriez, V., Delvaux, B., & Lothaire, S. (2016). Teacher shortage and attrition: Why do they leave? *British Educational Research Journal*, 42(1), 21–39.

- Fleming, C.M., Lamont, M., & Welburn, J.S. (2012). African Americans respond to stigmatization: The meanings and salience of confronting, deflecting conflict, educating the ignorant and 'managing the self'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35(3), 400–417.
- Fonsén, E., & Ukkonen-Mikkola, T. (2019). Early childhood education teachers' professional development towards pedagogical leadership. *Educational Research*, 61(2), 181–196.
- Grooms, A.A., Mahatmya, D., & Johnson, E.T. (2021). The retention of educators of color amidst institutionalized racism. *Educational Policy*, 35(2), 180–212.
- Grotberg, E.H. (2003). Promoting resilience in displaced persons. *The Ahfad Journal*, 20(1), 27–37.
- Guo, Y., Justice, L.M., Sawyer, B., & Tompkins, V. (2011). Exploring factors related to preschool teachers' self-efficacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(5), 961–968.
- Hong, J.Y. (2012). Why do some beginning teachers leave the school, and others stay? Understanding teacher resilience through psychological lenses. *Teachers and Teaching*, 18(4), 417–440.
- Ingersoll, R.M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American educational research journal*, 38(3), 499–534.
- Ingersoll, R.M. (2003). Turnover and shortages among science and mathematics teachers in the United States. In J. Rhoton, & P. Bowers (Eds.), *Science teachers retention: Mentoring and Renewal*. Arlington, VA: National Science Education Leadership Association and National Science Teachers Association Press.
- Ingersoll, R., Merrill, E., Stuckey, D., Collins, G., & Harrison, B. (2021). The demographic transformation of the teaching force in the United States. *Education Sciences*, 11(5), 234.
- Kahan-Strawczynski, P., Levi, D., & Konstantinov, V. (2010). Immigrant youth in Israel: The current situation. *Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute Engelberg Center for Children and Youth: State of Israel Ministry of Immigrant Absorption*.
- Kaplan, H. (2022). The unique effects of supporting beginning teachers' psychological needs through learning communities and a teacher-mentor's support: A longitudinal study based on self-determination theory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 859364.
- Kass, E., & Reingold, R. (2013). Strengthening self-efficacy. *Multicultural Education: From Theory to Practice*, 263.
- Kearney, S. (2014). Understanding beginning teacher induction: A contextualized examination of best practice. *Cogent education*, 1(1), 967477.
- Kogan, S.M., & Bae, D. (2020). Racial discrimination, protective parenting, and binge drinking among emerging adult Black men. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 44(11), 2343–2349.
- Maskit, D. (2013). First months in teaching: Novices relate to their difficulties. *Creative Education*, 4(4), 1–8.
- Mihaljević Djigunović, J., & Nikolov, M. (2019). Motivation of young language learners. In: M. Lamb, K. Csizér, A. Henry, & S. Ryan.
- Moshel, S., & Berkovich, I. (2020). Navigating ambiguity: Early childhood leaders' sense-making of their identity in a new mid-level role. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 48(3), 514–531.
- Musu-Gillette, L., Robinson, J., McFarland, J., KewalRamani, A., Zhang, A., & Wilkinson-Flicker, S. (2016). Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2016. NCES 2016–007. *National Center for Education Statistics*.

- Nadal, K.L., Wong, Y., Griffin, K., Sriken, J., Vargas, V., Wideman, M., & Kolawole, A. (2011). Microaggressions and the multiracial experience. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(7), 36–44.
- Palmor, E. (2016). The team for the eradication of racism against Ethiopian Israelis (Hebrew).
- Rinke, C.R. (2008). Understanding teachers' careers: Linking professional life to professional path. *Educational Research Review*, 3(1), 1–13.
- Schatz-Oppenheimer, O. (2015). TESFA: A unique program for education students of Ethiopian-descent. *Baderech Lehoraa* (in Hebrew).
- Schatz-Oppenheimer, O., (2020). TESFA: A program of hope for education students of Ethiopian-descent. (in Hebrew).
- Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., Buchanan, J., Varadharajan, M., & Burke, P.F. (2018). The experiences of early career teachers: New initiatives and old problems. *Professional Development in Education*, 44(2), 209–221.
- Semyonov, M., Raijman, R., & Maskileyson, D. (2015). Ethnicity and labor market incorporation of post-1990 immigrants in Israel. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 34(3), 331–359.
- Senom, F., Zakaria, A.R., & Ahmad Shah, S.S. (2013). Novice teachers' challenges and survival: Where do Malaysian ESL teachers stand? *American Journal of Educational Research*, 1(4), 119–125.
- Shoshana, A. (2016). The language of everyday racism and microaggression in the workplace: Palestinian professionals in Israel. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(6), 1052–1069.
- Smith, T.B., & Silva, L. (2011). Ethnic identity and personal well-being of people of color: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 58(1), 42.
- Sue, D.W., Capodilupo, C.M., & Holder, A. (2008). Racial microaggressions in the life experience of Black Americans. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 39(3), 329.
- Tan, S.Y., & Chou, C.C. (2018). Supervision effects on self-efficacy, competency, and job involvement of school counsellors. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, 28(1), 18–32.
- Tennbaum-Domonovich, H., Gidon, A., & Gilat, Y. (2018). The inclusion of Teachers of Ethiopian-descent in schools; research report. Tel Aviv: Levinsky college. (in Hebrew).
- Tsai, E., Fung, L., & Chow, L. (2006). Sources and Manifestations of Stress in Female Kindergarten Teachers. *International Education Journal*, 7(3), 364–370.
- Thomas, L., & Beauchamp, C. (2011). Understanding new teachers' professional identities through metaphor. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(4), 762–769.
- Vargas, J.M. (2020). Testimonios of Latinx novice teachers in California's San Joaquin Valley. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, California State University, Fresno.
- Wang, S., Chen, X., Li, Y., Luu, C., Yan, R., & Madrisotti, F. (2021). "I'm more afraid of racism than of the virus!": Racism awareness and resistance among Chinese migrants and their descendants in France during the Covid-19 pandemic. *European Societies*, 23(1), S721–S742.
- Wilson, W.J. (1999). *The bridge over the racial divide: Rising inequality and coalition politics* (Vol. 2). University of California Press.
- Zelinger Abbotbol, D. & Roush Gitti, E. (2021). *Moving the Spotlight from Integration to a Partnership Concept: A Research Report on Community Improvement in Diverse Communities*. Society for Community Development (in Hebrew).