

Article

Novice Physical Education Teachers in Israel: Facilitators and Barriers to Persistence in the Profession

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Abstract: The phenomenon of high attrition and dropout among novice teachers has been widely recognized as an issue that must be addressed. The current study aimed to explore this phenomenon in the field of physical education (PE). A longitudinal study using a mixed-methods approach was conducted. The participants consisted of 119 novice teachers at three points in time: during, at the end of the first year of internship, and two years after internship. Instruments included questionnaires, a semi-structured telephone survey, and in-depth face-to-face interviews. Results indicated that the majority of novice teachers intended to stay in the profession mainly due to idealistic reasons. Emotional and professional support from senior staff and/or management proved to be important to their decision to persist in the profession. Barriers that were found distinctive to PE included poor working conditions such as a lack of facilities or equipment. Additionally, participants reported discouragement from the discovery that PE was perceived as a less important subject in comparison to other school subjects. The vast majority reported that they had not been sufficiently prepared for the realities of the teaching profession.

Keywords: physical education; novice teachers; induction; teacher training

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of high attrition, stress, and dropout among novice teachers has been well documented in the last two decades [1,2], and has become a major concern for education systems. According to Ingersoll [3], approximately 50% of all new teachers in the United States leave the profession in the first five years. Similar rates were reported for Australia [1] and Europe [4]. In Israel, 26% of teachers drop out after one year of teaching, 38% in the following three years of teaching, and 45% within five years of being in the profession [4]. Consequently, education systems are suffering from a severe shortage of teachers, with worrisome educational and financial implications [5], pointing to a need to attract new teachers while retaining effective existing teachers [6].

Among the top reasons reported by teachers for leaving the profession are low salaries, poor administrative support, and problems related to student behavior and discipline [7–9]. Nevertheless, new teachers can persevere and succeed if they are equipped with quality training and induction support [3,7,10].

The development of a teacher is a complex and ongoing dynamic process that is ever changing throughout the teacher's career. Research on teacher socialization examines the processes by which the individual becomes a participating member of the society of teachers [11]. This process reflects a dialectical exchange between the teacher and socializing agents within cultural and social contexts, and generally involves three phases: acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational

socialization, which develop along a temporal continuum [11–13]. *Acculturation* begins at birth and continues until the individual makes the decision to enter a teacher education program. Throughout these years, early experiences as students form the basis for the ways in which future teachers conceptualize teaching. The second phase, professional socialization, refers to the process by which an individual entering the teaching profession acquires the knowledge, values, sensitivities, and skills required by this profession. Teacher education programs are considered instruments for such professional socialization. The *last phase, organizational socialization*, which takes place in schools where graduate student-teachers assume and are socialized into the role of a teacher, continues throughout the individual's career [14]. A better understanding of teacher socialization may assist in explaining the high rates of attrition, and perhaps offer insight as to how it can be attenuated.

Recently, a series of studies were conducted concerning early career challenges in physical education (PE) [15–17]. Based on Fessler and Christensen's career cycle model [18], Woods and Lynn [19] conducted a longitudinal qualitative study to learn about one physical educator's career cycle. They identified several stages throughout the teacher's career: induction, competency-building, enthusiasm and growth, career stability, and career frustration. Their study provides insights into the areas that are in need of change in order to motivate and retain high-quality physical educators.

In Israel, an induction year is mandatory for all student-teachers who wish to obtain a teaching license. A novice teacher support program, 'Interning in Teaching,' has been conducted in Israel by the Teacher Education Division of the Ministry of Education since 1999. The program includes two support systems: Individual mentoring by mentor teachers in the receiving school to facilitate integration into a new organizational culture, and an internship workshop in the teacher education institution to provide professional support in the socialization process.

While the literature on novice teacher induction is rich, research on this issue in the field of PE, concerning the preparation of novice teachers, is still insufficient. The specific requirements and needs of the PE teacher, particularly due to the marginalization and isolation of PE as a school subject, which is generally situated low on the priorities of school agendas [14,20], led to the current exploration. This study aimed to bridge this gap in knowledge by gaining a better understanding concerning facilitators and barriers to novice teachers' persistence in the PE profession. As the number of novice PE teachers dropping out of the profession continues to rise, a subsequent aim is that the knowledge gained from the current exploration will assist in forming recommendations for how to better prepare prospective teachers and increase the likelihood that they continue in the profession.

Thus, the following aims guided this inquiry: (1) To identify facilitators to novice teachers' intention to continue in the domain of PE; (2) To identify barriers that inhibit novice teachers' intention to continue in this profession; and (3) To identify in what ways teacher training is insufficient according to the novice teachers' perceptions, and to present their recommendations for addressing these insufficiencies.

2. Methods

The current investigation was a three-stage study conducted using an explanatory sequential design. This design began the quantitative data collection phase with a post-positivistic orientation, including the selection of instruments and analysis. This stage was followed by a qualitative phase of in-depth phenomenological description, and a shift to employing constructivist assumptions [21]. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the academic institution in Israel where it was carried out.

2.1. Participants and Procedure

2.1.1. First Stage

The participants were 119 (75 females and 44 males) novice Israeli teachers in their first ($N = 89$) or second ($N = 30$) year of teaching. They were members of the school staff and received their salaries

from the Ministry of Education. They were recruited from a course entitled 'Case Studies in Teaching', designed particularly for student teachers, and mandatory for all student teachers in order to receive their Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree in PE and a teaching license. All students who were registered in the course during the 2015-2016 academic year were contacted by telephone. After the participants gave their informed consent, the investigators proceeded with an initial short telephone survey (See Appendix A). The aim of the survey was to provide a preliminary map of the scope of persistence in or dropout from teaching among this sample of novice physical education teachers and to identify some of the facilitators and barriers influencing this decision.

The 119 participants who answered the initial survey were requested to provide background information, including demographic data, information about their teaching position, hours of teaching, place(s) of work, description of the school and staff, and grades taught. In addition, the participants were asked how they perceived their integration at the school, their perception of how the senior staff accepted them, and what kind of assistance and guidance, if any, they received. The participants were then asked if they had experienced an incident that heightened their desire to continue teaching at school, and/or an incident that may have hindered their desire to continue as a schoolteacher. Most participants provided short answers, mentioning certain facilitators and barriers, but did not provide any rich descriptions or details.

The survey comprised 24 structured open and closed questions, such as, 'In the last year, have you experienced anything that promoted your intention to continue teaching?'; 'Have you experienced anything that made you decide to leave?'; 'In what area/subject/domain do you feel less prepared/not competent?'; and 'Have you received any support from your senior colleagues in the school?' In addition, three 5-point Likert scale evaluations were requested: 1) Rate the level of your enjoyment of teaching; 2) Rate the quality of the preparation for teaching program you received; and 3) Rate the likelihood of your intention to continue in the profession as a PE teacher. The Likert scale evaluations were taken from a previous quantitative study that examined perceptions of novice PE teachers regarding the program of induction they received [22]. The internal consistency of the evaluations for the current study ranged from 0.87–0.89.

2.1.2. Second Stage

As we were interested in generating more robust qualitative data, three months following the first stage, which was mainly quantitative, a second stage was planned for a number of participants recommended as sufficient for data saturation [23]. In this stage, 29 novice teachers from the preliminary cohort who answered the first survey volunteered to take part in a semi-structured phone interview (See Appendix B).

In these follow-up interviews, participants were asked to expand upon some of the answers they provided in the initial questionnaire. Four main questions were followed up, and interviewees were requested to provide more extensive descriptions and details about the responses they gave. They were asked to explain what satisfied them about teaching as well as what they disliked about teaching, providing details and examples. They were also asked to describe in detail at least two events or incidents that heightened their desire to continue teaching and two events or incidents that decreased their desire to continue teaching. They were also asked to detail more extensively the factors that influenced their decision to continue or leave the teaching profession.

This stage enabled us to broaden our understandings concerning issues that arose from the first stage. The interview guide, based on the initial survey, was designed according to literature recommendations [24–26] and included probing and clarification questions. Specific examples of teaching and critical school moments were provided by the participants regarding what they had experienced with the school teaching staff, the principal, the children, and their parents.

2.1.3. Third Stage

Several months after the second round of telephone interviews, during which time the data collected was processed and analyzed, the researchers had a better understanding of the barriers to and facilitators for persisting in the teaching profession. However, the process the novice teachers underwent during their induction to teaching had still not been fully explored. One year following the second round of telephone interviews, as a third stage, open-ended face-to-face interviews with four novice teachers who had not been previously interviewed were conducted (See Appendix C). Two novice teachers (one male and one female) who had decided to remain in the profession, and two novice teachers (one male and one female) who had decided to drop out, were chosen to represent the diversity of views. The aim was to delve into the induction process experienced by novice teachers who had not been part of the original cohort. In this procedure, an open-ended narrative interview was conducted with the purpose of ‘holding a magnifying glass’ [27] to the data that had been gathered in the first two stages.

2.2. Data Analysis

In each stage of data collection, quantitative data were organized and analyzed. Qualitative data was subject to content analysis [21,24,28]. The aim of the analysis was to build an organized system of categories from the unstructured data that emerged, representing the participants’ perceptions. Each of the interviews was transcribed verbatim and was analyzed on a line-by-line basis.

2.3. Trustworthiness

While quantitative data were gathered during the data collection process, the majority of the data analyzed was qualitative in nature. As such, trustworthiness was established using the following techniques to enhance credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability: (a) Conducting an audit trail, specifying the steps involved in the methodological procedures followed in the study; (b) cross-checking multiple data sources for consistency; (c) formulating a detailed description of the site, participants, and procedure; and (d) building the survey to increase the credibility of the findings from the onset of the study by relying on previous studies as described above, and discussing each item until full agreement was achieved concerning its clarity and its relevance to the research aims [29].

3. Results

The results found following each stage of data collection and analysis are presented below.

3.1. First Stage: Initial Telephone Survey

Of the 119 novice teachers who took part in the internship, 70 (59%) continued teaching PE two years after the internship (see the flowchart in Figure 1).

As can be seen from the flowchart, 26 novice teachers left the profession after one year of teaching, and an additional 23 left the following year (a total of 49). Thirteen ended up teaching school subjects other than PE, even though they did not have the qualifications to teach them. Due to a severe shortage of teachers in certain subjects, principals are inclined to assign novice teachers to positions teaching these subjects. Novice teachers often reluctantly accept these assignments because they feel compelled to do so, and the extra hours mean higher wages. In terms of what circumstances opened the door for a teaching position in school, the vast majority (78%) reported that they were offered a position, either full or part time, that had become available at the school. In less common circumstances, they had been offered a position as substitutes for a teacher on sabbatical or maternity leave, or for absent teachers (21%), and still fewer were given a position in growing schools with a demand for more teachers (5%).

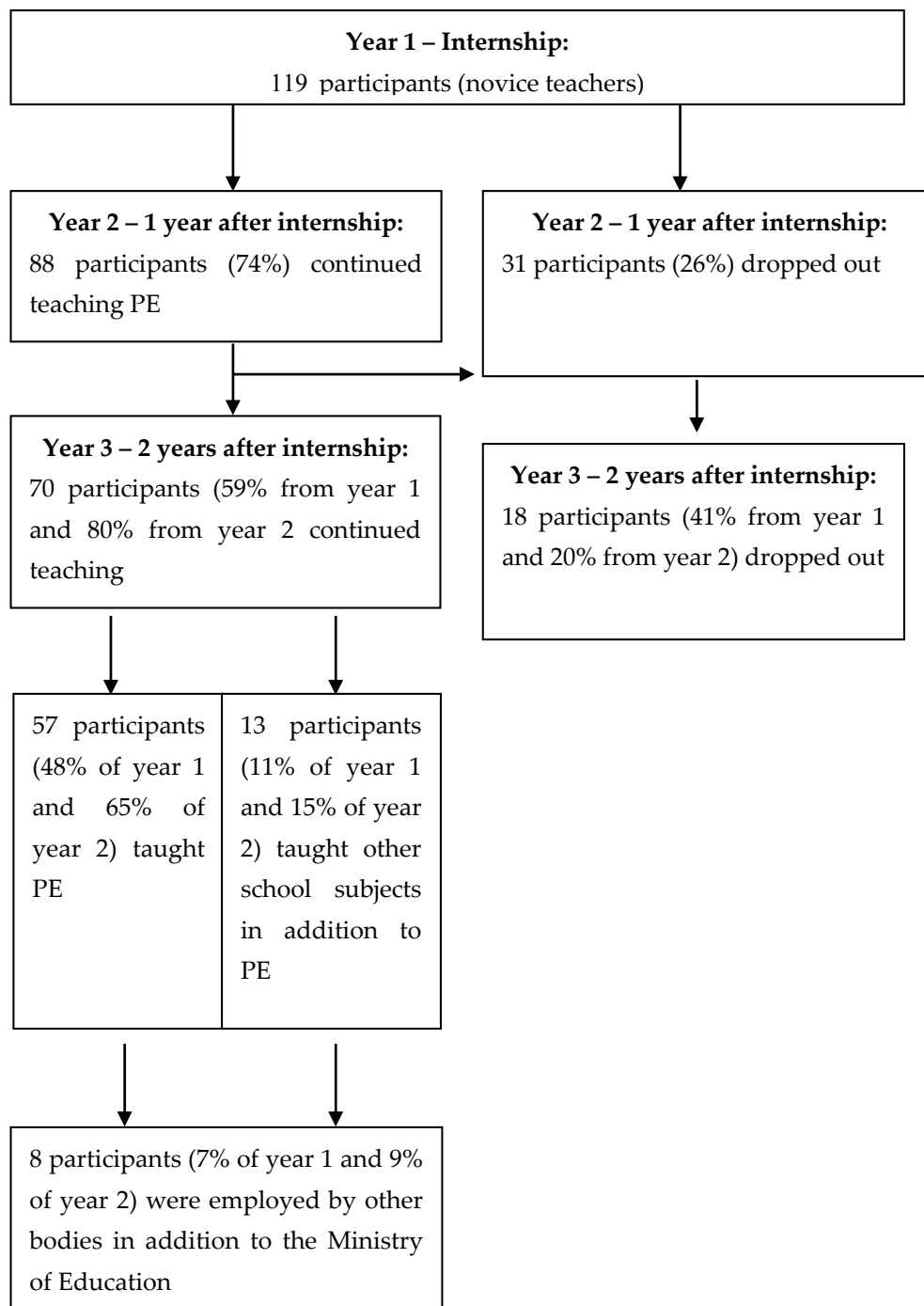


Figure 1. Flowchart of persistence in or dropout from teaching Physical Education (PE).

The main barrier reported by the 31 novice teachers who had not continued to teach in the school system following their first year of induction included other employment (34%), an inability to find employment in the school system as PE teachers (28%), pregnancy (21%), and professional difficulties they encountered teaching a challenging population (10%).

This survey provided an initial map of possible aspects that may contribute to or hinder novice teachers from continuing to teach PE in the Israeli school system.

3.2. Second Stage: Semi-Structured Telephone Interviews

Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with 29 novice teachers who had participated in the first telephone interview.

3.2.1. Background Information

Seventeen females aged 26–37 ($M = 29.06$), and 12 males aged 26–41 ($M = 31.75$) participated in this stage of the research. Gender differences according to school level of teaching positions can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. School level of teaching positions according to gender.

	Female	Male
School level of teaching positions	Elementary school (35%) Junior + high school (24%) Only high school (12%)	Elementary school (25%) Junior + high school (17%) Only high school (42%)

Of the 29 respondents, 24 (83%) intended to continue in the teaching profession (14 females and 10 males). However, only 55% viewed teaching in school as their main source of income. Participants were teaching between 8 and 26 hours a week ($M = 13.86 \pm 4.75$), with no gender differences. During their second year, the average number of hours typically increased to $M = 17.32 \pm 5.91$, climbing further by their third year to $M = 20.16 \pm 4.76$.

More men reported that they would prefer a larger teaching-hour load (70%) as opposed to the women (43%). Surprisingly, only 54% of the teachers were teaching strictly PE. The other 46% were teaching other school subjects in addition to PE, such as language, mathematics, and history.

3.2.2. Reasons for Persistence in or Dropout from the Teaching Profession

The majority of the respondents (83%) answered positively regarding their intention to continue teaching. Three women who responded that they would not continue teaching provided mainly personal reasons, such as giving birth, whereas the two men who did not intend to continue teaching reported difficulties with the principal, an inflexible way of thinking by those in charge, and an inability to influence the pupils. Among the teachers who expressed an interest in continuing in the profession, both men and women reported idealistic reasons, including their love for children, a sense of mission, the opportunity to instill values in children, and their love for the profession, for example:

I love the children, I know that what I teach is important for the kids' development, and I enjoy the love I get back from them. I am here to stay and to influence.

More practically, they also reported good working conditions. Men mentioned that the working conditions enabled them to take an additional employment for supplementary income, and women mentioned that their teaching schedule facilitated integrating their professional life with their role as mothers. In addition, they mentioned high budgets for funding equipment and events, as well as quality facilities.

3.2.3. Support from Senior Staff Members

Novice teachers perceived the support of senior staff members as important to their successful induction. Twenty-five percent of the teachers reported that they received no assistance from experienced staff. Some of them experienced negative reactions, describing unpleasant, uninviting, and distant teachers who were unwelcoming to novice teachers. Some reported that senior teachers disrespected them, and did not go out of their way to provide assistance, for example:

I must say that I felt left alone. The senior teacher gave me nothing, I felt as if she was afraid that I might steal the crown . . . instead of being my role model and working with me, she worked parallel to me and showed no interest whenever I tried to get closer. Disappointed, I gave up.

In contrast, 75% of novice teachers experienced a great deal of close support. They reported that senior teachers showed acceptance and provided assistance, guidance, and a great deal of cooperation. They assisted in the promotion of PE in the school. They offered ideas for 'PE Week', close collaboration, joint preparation of study plans, examples of lesson plans, and assistance in organizing teams, competitions, and 'Sport Day', as well as invitations to observe lessons. The novice teachers received advice and guidance on coping with children and teachers, how to encourage children, how to manage discipline issues, and how to solve problems. As one participant reported about her mentor:

She was terrific. She created a wonderful atmosphere; whenever I needed her, she was there for me, especially with advice, but also with lesson illustrations and assistance with school projects.

One of the teachers reported that the principal conducted discussions once a week with the novice teachers, which was very beneficial. Moreover, many novice teachers described the senior staff as pleasant, respectful, attentive, and caring, enabling them to 'pour their heart out', thereby providing attention and empathy.

These participants felt that they were not left alone with the difficulties, questions, and educational dilemmas they encountered. The most frequent support was a routine weekly conversation with an experienced teacher from the staff. The positive contribution of this conversation was attributed, not only to the feedback on the novice teacher's lessons given after observations, or after demonstration lessons of the senior teacher to the novice teacher, but also to the social-emotional supportive attitude of the senior teacher and the ability to listen, to understand, and to encourage.

In addition, a sense of confidence was developed when the novice teachers received the principal's approval for their initiatives in the school and their involvement in school life. Hence, participants attributed great contribution to these kinds of support, both for their professional development and for their feelings of belonging and adjustment to the ecological system of school.

3.2.4. Positive Experiences That Increased Their Desire to Continue Teaching

Emotional responses were related to positive feedback from children, parents, and colleagues, including love expressed by hugs from the children as the most fulfilling experience. Positive feedback expressed by the school that led to additional roles also increased their motivation to continue teaching. Novice teachers also reported a good environment, including joint collaboration with other teachers, which created a working model for the group, and the team spirit that was forged among the children during lessons. Professional responses were related to a sense of accomplishment when observing progress in a student with difficulties, improvement in the children's abilities, and an increase in the level of PE in the school. For instance:

The Three Generations Project that I initiated for the third grade classes was a great success. The principal flattered me in person, and publicly. Since then, I felt that the principal's appreciation toward me increased. I was encouraged and my self-confidence and enthusiasm was high in the sky.

3.2.5. Negative Experiences Which May Discourage Persistence in the Teaching Profession

The most noticeable negative instances reported were related to disrespect from the management and violence by pupils toward teachers. While 50% of the female teachers reported they did not experience any negative incidences that would affect their desire to continue teaching, the other 50% were discouraged by a disrespect for the profession by the principal, lack of support by the subject coordinator, being yelled at by the coordinator, lack of contact or interest during a two-month sick leave, and violence against teachers by pupils. Male teachers reported violence and disrespectful behavior by pupils. Among the men, issues regarding procedures and educational values were raised.

For example, the sports hall was used for events without informing the teacher in advance, promises made by the management were often broken, a great deal of emphasis was placed on grades rather than educational values, and there was an unpleasant atmosphere among the staff members. As one of the participants reported:

One of the moments that left me speechless was when the vice-principal approached me in the teachers' room, touched my back and asked me in a friendly manner to upgrade Arielle's grade from a C to an A since all her grades are A+, and "let's try to help her feel good, and not spoil her fine report card" ... she did not listen to my voice ... the student was more important than my professional considerations!

3.2.6. Satisfaction from Teaching

When rating the extent of their satisfaction from teaching on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all; 5 = very much), the mean score was 4.02 ± 0.95 . The vast majority of the respondents (87.5%) rated this item between 4 and 5, expressing their high level of satisfaction, and only 13% of teachers rated it 3 (some satisfaction). No teachers selected 1 or 2 on the scale. In support, as one participant answered a related open-ended question:

The satisfaction from teaching arrived after several months, when I saw that my classes have good habits of arriving and leaving the lesson, when they know their warm-up routine, when they succeed even in practices that were new to them, such as skills in gymnastics, or navigating, or hip-hop. The most exciting feeling was when they stayed during the break and continued practicing the long jump.

3.2.7. Preparation for the Teaching Profession

On a scale of 1 (very little) to 5 (very extensive), the mean score regarding the extent of the training they received to prepare them for the teaching profession was 3.38 ± 1.08 . Fewer than half (48%) of the respondents rated the extent of training as appropriate (4 or 5), about a third (35%) rated it as average (3), and 17% rated it as insufficient (1 or 2). In support of the above quantitative results, one participant reported:

When we enter school as student teachers we do not really know what is happening in the school. We are aware only of what is happening in the lesson of the class that we teach. I think that teacher preparation should include some preparation for the whole school as an organization.

Concerning aspects for which they felt they had not been sufficiently prepared, several participants mentioned lack of teaching methods for practical lessons, how to cope with school micro-politics, and how to cope with the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Education. Some felt unprepared for dealing with difficulties with other staff members, parents, or the management. When faced with unexpected situations that are common in the school environment, such as lack of access to facilities or another group on the playing field, they reported that they lacked the tools for dealing with such situations. Moreover, they believed they had not been sufficiently provided with technical skills, such as writing a C.V., searching for employment, or making their way through the overwhelming quantity of forms required by the Ministry of Education.

When asked how they coped with their lack of preparation in any of the issues they raised, the majority (54%) replied that they had not taken any active steps to overcome this. Some (29%) replied that they consulted with peers, and a few (17%) were either taking or planning to take an in-service course to acquire additional tools.

3.2.8. Reasons for Dropping out of the Teaching Profession

Respondents who had decided to leave the profession reported that the main reasons were an insufficient salary, not being offered sufficient hours, or finding employment with better pay. Other reasons included disrespect for the field of PE by the management, lack of support by the staff or

supervisor, a hostile attitude by the principal, lack of ethical standards at the school, lack of facilities, and low pupil motivation. For example:

One of the moments in which I realized that I am not considered important to anyone was during Parents' Day. Parents approached all the teachers to discuss their children. I was the only teacher whom not even one parent approached. I felt like I was "left home alone" ... and thought to myself—nobody really cares about this subject in school, why should I stay here?

3.3. Third Stage: In-Depth Interviews

Open-ended unstructured interviews were conducted with four students during their first year of internship. Two had decided to continue teaching and two to drop out (one male and one female in each condition). Analysis of the interview transcripts yielded two main themes: technical components and emotional components.

3.3.1. Technical Components

These included: (1) Working load of teaching hours; (2) Teaching conditions, mainly facilities and equipment; and (3) Low salary.

1. The number of hours and the teaching schedule proved important for the students' level of satisfaction and future professional intentions. Two were pleased with what they expressed as a 'convenient schedule', referring to an appropriate number of teaching hours, which allowed them time to invest in their studies. As one novice teacher reported,

I really like the fact that I have free time in the afternoon; the holidays are really good.

However, two others expressed dissatisfaction with an overload of teaching hours. They reported that extra hours were unexpectedly added to their original schedule—not according to what they had been promised prior to the opening of the school year. As one student reported,

The principal spoke with me about a 10-hour schedule, and suddenly I received a schedule with 22 hours, not including private hours and stay-at-school hours—from 22 it became 27.

The issue of private hours and stay-at-school hours was raised as being difficult to bear. Private hours are given to pupils who require assistance in certain subjects, beyond the hours in class, and this enables the subject teachers to attend to the individual needs of the pupil. However, novice teachers reported cases in which they were asked to provide private hours to pupils in reading and writing, rather than in PE. Stay-at-school hours refer to time allotted to teachers to mark pupils' work at school. As this kind of paperwork is not relevant to PE teachers, these hours were perceived by them as a waste of their time. The overload of hours can have a detrimental burnout effect leading the novice teacher to leave the profession.

They traumatized me. Even when they spoke with me about a one-third time position, the damage had already been done and I didn't want to hear about it...

As can be discerned from the above report, this novice teacher was not only dissatisfied with the overload of hours, but also with the fact that she had not been consulted about the teaching load, nor had she been given an opportunity to accept or decline the extra hours. No consideration was given to the fact that they were still college students and had additional obligations. As one novice teacher remarked,

I think the main conclusion is that the scope of the position should be limited in the initial year of teaching, especially if we are still studying.

2. Teaching conditions, mainly facilities and equipment, was another important aspect mentioned by the interviewees. Novice teachers reported that schools in high socio-economic areas enjoyed good conditions, which positively affected their level of satisfaction with teaching and their intention to remain in the profession. One novice teacher was teaching at a school in an affluent neighborhood, and reported,

The facilities are really good; there's new equipment ... there's a new sports hall, three fields, a jumping pit ... There are no cancellations because of the weather.

Working under such conditions obviously increases the level of satisfaction with the teaching profession. These conditions enable the novice teacher to work in a professional manner and express his/her full professional potential.

In contrast, an aspect that has a negative influence on satisfaction from teaching, and hinders the intention to remain in the profession, is poor teaching conditions. As one novice teacher reported,

There are no facilities whatsoever—no storage room, no sports hall, no volleyball net, or elastic bands ... there's an unshaded soccer field. You stand a lot of hours out in the sun.

However, an alternative way of coping with lack of equipment was found by a teacher with initiative:

I decided not to give up, and instead of whining, to initiate and build my own equipment with the kids. Our storeroom became a place of recycling invented equipment: Empty bottles turned to colored weights, newspapers were turned into cylinders and rolls, cans were turned into shooting targets and balance-walking-crutches, square cutting-boards with wheels were used as scooters.

Still, another novice teacher raised the difficulties of teaching in a new school, built in a new and growing neighborhood and still under construction.

Many new buildings are under construction, there's lots of noise, and you work outside under the sun in an unshaded asphalt field. It's very difficult to concentrate as a teacher, and more so as pupils. Not only I but also the children suffer, having to cope with bulldozers being around, and with the burning sun.

3. Low salary. An important aspect that has a compelling influence on the novice teachers' intention to persist in or drop out of the profession is the extremely low salary they receive. All the novice teachers, without exception, reported that they were unable to sustain their living on a teachers' salary. They were required to take a second employment in order to meet their living expenses. As one novice teacher reported feeling after receiving his first paycheck,

I ran around like crazy, and all that work for 2,000 shekels?

Another student reported,

... I didn't know what salary to expect. At the end of the month I was shocked; it's really embarrassing. There's no way people can make a living from this kind of salary.

In all the interviews, the same discontent with the salary was expressed, alongside a sense of humiliation when receiving such low pay for the hard work they invested. The understanding that additional employment is necessary if they are to remain in the teaching profession is an important consideration for novice teachers when making a decision to continue the following year.

3.3.2. Emotional Components

This appeared as the second category influencing novice teachers' levels of satisfaction and intention to remain in the profession, and included several aspects: (1) A supportive school environment;

(2) The positive relationships formed with the children; (3) The positive feedback they received from parents; and (4) The positive feedback and/or relationships formed with colleagues.

- (1) A supportive school environment had a prominent positive influence on the teachers' satisfaction and increased their intention to continue the following year. For example, one novice teacher reported:

The teaching staff was very supportive. I'm happy to enter the teachers' room; most are young, really nice people.

Novice teachers also reported receiving support from the subject coordinator as well as from an attentive principal.

- (2) Positive relations formed with the children:

The children are 'crazy about me', I walk in school like a beauty queen. Children hug me, I have special 'high-fives' with the girls in 5th grade ... , they shower me with love ...

- (3) Feedback from parents: One of the novice teachers reported that,

There were parents waiting for me outside the school to tell me that their children talk about me at home, that they enjoy the lessons.

- (4) Feedback from colleagues:

My colleagues approved my initiative and praised me during the staff committee. I felt that it was one of my biggest achievements this year.

None of the novice teachers interviewed reported any negative experiences with the children, parents, or teaching staff. In addition, none of the novice teachers expressed a low level of satisfaction with the teaching profession or the intention not to remain in the profession due to a lack of support or to negative emotional aspects.

The technical and emotional aspects that emerged in the interviews were also discussed in relation to the training and preparation they received prior to their induction to teaching. The novice teachers differentiated between theoretical courses and applied courses. While they mainly reported good theoretical preparation in terms of teaching specific skills and subject matter, such preparation was in stark contrast to their field experience. They reported a lack of readiness and an extremely difficult transition, for which they had been insufficiently prepared, concerning the following four aspects: (1) Coping with the responsibility of teaching a large group of pupils; (2) A large number of consecutive working hours; (3) Insufficient skills or coping methods for teaching in schools that have no appropriate facilities or equipment; (4) Facing unexpected situations and the need to improvise in real time; and (5) Coping with the school climate and micro-politics.

The following is an example of coping with the responsibilities of teaching a large group of pupils and a large load of consecutive working hours at one time:

... they don't prepare you properly for being out in the field. I understand why they split classes, but teaching only 10 children does not prepare you for the reality in the field. Dealing with 35 pupils, dealing with teaching all day long without breaks...It's like coming to a math test and finding questions on nuclear physics.

Insufficient skills or coping methods for teaching in schools that have no appropriate facilities or equipment, and facing unexpected situations, were both important issues raised by the novice teachers:

I'm trying to learn the system and how to deal with surprises. This week I had a situation that happens every once in a while: Suppose I have a 6th grade of boys and girls who need to be separated—the boys played soccer and the girls something else. Then 2nd grade pupils are working on preparations for a

ceremony at the other end of the field. The theater teacher was absent so they brought a circus teacher who did juggling for them at the other end of the field!

The above example indicates the constant chaotic flux of events in the reality of the school environment, in contrast to the neat and organized programs they learn to prepare during teacher training.

Coping with the school climate and micro-politics is another issue for which novice teachers reported feeling ill-prepared. While, on the one hand, most novice teachers reported a supportive environment at school, their lack of understanding regarding how the system functions, what their teaching schedule would include or exclude, or what the components of their salary would be gave them a sense of 'being thrown into the water' without adequate prior preparation.

4. Discussion

The current study aimed to explore the induction process in Israel as experienced by novice teachers in their first and second years after their internship in schools. It aimed to: (1) Identify facilitators to novice teachers' persistence in the field of PE; (2) Identify barriers that inhibit novice teachers' intention to continue in this profession; and (3) Identify in which ways teacher training is insufficient according to the novice teachers' perceptions, and to present their recommendations for addressing these insufficiencies.

Our results indicate that, according to novice teachers, their intention to continue in the profession is mainly due to idealistic reasons, including love for children, a sense of mission, the opportunity to instill values in children, and their love for the profession. These sentiments were formed and reinforced by concrete positive experiences at school. Positive experiences that were found to reinforce the novice teachers and 'fuel' their intention to stay in the profession mainly included four kinds of experiences: (1) Success in projects that they initiated in the school, such as happy breaks, three-generation physical activity day, Friday walking-to-school day, orienteering week, and the Hanukkah race; (2) Success with individuals in one-on-one instruction. They felt that they enhanced student motivation for participating in their lesson; (3) Encouragement and support from the principal; and (4) Good collaboration with senior staff increased their feelings of belonging.

Concerning the second aim of the study, approximately 50% of the participants described disrespect by management and violence by pupils toward teachers as the most negative experiences. As such, in contrast to fulfilling their ideal vision of education as they had expected, reality led to an opposite outcome. At the same time, other participants reported a decision to drop out of the teaching profession due to mainly practical reasons. They had not experienced any negative teaching incidents that would affect their desire to continue teaching. They held a positive view of teaching and had positive experiences. Nevertheless, they reported issues regarding procedures and practical problems, including low wages that prevented them from making a respectable living. Our novice teachers had decided to leave the profession because of insufficient pay, often due to insufficient hours, obliging them to find other employment with better pay. Other reasons were a lack of administrative support, an unfulfilled need to exchange necessary information with colleagues, and undeveloped collegial relationships with peers.

Concerning the third aim of the current study, novice teachers highlighted weaknesses of the teacher training program in which they were or had taken part, and suggested recommendations for addressing these insufficiencies. The novice teachers differentiated between theoretical courses and applied courses. Our participants mostly reported good theoretical preparation, but a lack of readiness concerning experience on the field. They identified a large gap between the theory in the classroom about teaching PE and the practical reality of teaching. Particularly in the subject of PE, they sensed that they had received a large amount of knowledge about the usage of diverse equipment, techniques of teaching in optimal physical conditions, strategies for coping with an ideal and unrealistically small number of students, and how to conduct themselves within the perfect school with the ideal principal and supportive staff and parents. During their internship, many encountered the feeling that the

theoretical tools they had received would mainly have to stay within the toolbox, as the reality of the school environment required a completely different set of tools. As such, they recommended that the preparation program be improved by providing them with skills on how to improvise in imperfect teaching settings, how to cope with lack of equipment and changing school conditions, as well as how to cope with the general school environment and the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Education.

The findings of the current study offer support to the literature on facilitators that help teachers to persist in the PE profession. Similar to others, our findings indicate that being education-oriented and motivated are fundamental qualities for novice teachers to possess if they want to persevere in the profession. As Nieto [30] asserted, good teachers stay in the teaching profession because they love what they do. Cochran-Smith [31] labelled them 'lovers and dreamers'. They stay even if they have difficult conditions and circumstances. They stay because they love, believe in, and respect their pupils. This attitude reflects the emotional, relational, and personal aspects of the teaching profession [31].

Nevertheless, although they are necessary, love and ideals are not enough. Some of our novice teachers, as idealistic as they may be, were struggling to make ends meet with a novice teacher's salary, which forced many of them to take on an additional job. This survival condition was described, not only as a practical need, but also a demoralization of their status as teachers. In addition, as Johnson argued in *The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers* [32], the new generation of teachers has career expectations that need to be understood and addressed in order to encourage them to remain in the profession. In their view, new teachers expect to be well rewarded, not only financially but also emotionally. They want to collaborate with colleagues and to work in organizations that support them. Indeed, participants in the current study felt that they were accepted and enjoyed open communication that enabled them to ask for assistance and cooperation from their peers. Many of them described the senior staff as pleasant, respectful, attentive, and caring. Furthermore, they received advice and guidance on coping with children and other teachers, and on how to encourage children, manage discipline issues, and solve problems. It seems that multiple sources of positive emotions are vital to novice teachers' willingness to remain in the profession.

The need for support and encouragement among novice PE teachers is especially important because PE is marginalized as an academic discipline; that is, it is perceived among children, parents, and in the public in general as less academic compared to the other subjects in school [33–35]. The current study supports this perception. Many participants spoke of the lower status of PE they felt at the school where they were teaching in comparison to other subjects. Lessons they had carefully planned had been undermined due to events deemed more important by the school principal. They were assigned to give private hours to pupils in subjects considered more important than PE. This study clearly shows that while teacher induction, in general, faces many challenges, teacher induction in the field of PE presents additional trials.

Regarding the current study's findings on novice teachers' perceptions of preparation for the profession, our findings partially support the literature. While others reported a lack of preparation for real-world teaching situations in theoretical courses [36], the novice teachers in the current study expressed satisfaction with the preparation they had received from theoretical courses. However, in terms of providing practical experience, novice teachers in the study echoed previous criticisms that found teacher education programs lacked in the provision of practical experience, leading to feelings of unpreparedness [36] or reality shock [37]. Similarly, the findings of the current study indicate an extremely difficult transition, as well as inadequate preparation, concerning teaching crowded classes, a heavy workload, inappropriate facilities or equipment, a need to improvise in real time, and coping with the school climate and micro-politics. It should be emphasized that, unlike other subjects taught in school, PE is dependent upon equipment and facilities, and when these are lacking the novice teacher is left feeling frustrated and helpless. If the school sports hall or gymnasium is taken away by the management for other uses with 'greater significance', the teacher is left with the class having 'to look for a place to teach the lesson, and actually—who cares?' (Remarks by a first-year middle-school

teacher). This example is unlikely to occur in other subjects, and demonstrates what others described as ‘marginalization’ [35,38,39].

5. Conclusions and Implications

Considering the results of the current study, several actions are recommended to PE program developers. First, interviewing novice teachers about the internship program they underwent, while at the same time facing the reality of their induction year into teaching, provides comprehensive, sincere, and relevant feedback that should be seriously considered. Second, and more specifically, during teaching preparation, it is important to enhance the novice teachers’ awareness concerning the requirement for developing resilience in the future. The induction process should be aimed at a successful adaptation into the school that takes place despite obstacles, so that the maintenance of personal well-being, job satisfaction, and commitment to the profession is achieved. When examining the barriers individually, each isolated barrier may seem marginal, but an examination of their integration reveals a more complex phenomenon that may influence the novice teachers’ well-being and satisfaction from teaching, and their willingness to persist in the profession.

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Appendix A. Questionnaire (Stage 1)

1. Gender: M/F
2. Age
3. Family Status: Single/Married/Divorced/Other
4. Are you interested in teaching in the national education system? Yes/No
5. Do you consider school teaching as your primary source of income? Yes/No
6. What age group(s) are you currently teaching?
Kindergarten/Elementary/Middle School/High School
7. In what district?
- 8.a. In how many schools do you teach?
- 8.b. If you teach in one, would you be willing to teach in two schools? Yes/No
- 8.c. If you teach in one or two, would you be willing to teach in more than two schools to reach a full time salary? Yes/No
- 9.a. Are you satisfied with the number of teaching hours you received this year? Yes/No
- 9.b. Would you be interested in receiving more teaching hours? Yes/No
- 10.a. Are the hours you received all in physical education? Yes/No
- 10.b. If not, what additional subject(s) are they in?
11. How did you receive your current teaching position?
 - a. I was approached by the principal
 - b. Recommendation by a teacher on the school staff
 - c. I was referred by the supervisor
 - d. A family’s or friend’s contact
 - e. Independent search among schools?
- 12.a. Are you interested in continuing in your current teaching position? Yes/No
- 12.b. If yes, please detail the reasons:
- 12.c. If no, please detail the reasons:

13. Please describe the attitude of the senior teachers towards you. How is it expressed? Did you receive any support/guidance from the senior staff? Please provide an example.

14. Which grades do you prefer teaching?

Kindergarten/Elementary/Middle School/High School

15.a. Have you experienced an event/incident in the past year that has heightened your desire to continue teaching at school? Yes/No

15.b. If yes, please describe the event/incident.

16.a. Have you experienced an event/incident in the past year that has decreased your desire to continue teaching at school? Yes/No

16.b. If yes, please describe the event.

17.a. Did you leave your teaching position at school? Yes/No

17.b. If yes, what were the reasons?

a. Social aspects (e.g., hostile attitude from the staff; discomfort in teachers' room)

b. Emotional aspects (e.g., frustration with working with children; lack of satisfaction)

18.a. Have you made a decision regarding continuing or not continuing to teach next year? Yes/No

18.b. If yes, what have you decided? Continuing/Not continuing

18.c. Have you received support in your decision? Yes/No.

18.d. If yes, from whom?

19.a. On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied are you with teaching?

1. not at all
2. a little bit
3. neutral
4. a lot
5. very much

19.b. Please describe what you enjoy about teaching.

20. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you wish to continue teaching in future?

1. not at all
2. a little bit
3. neutral
4. a lot
5. very much

21.a. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent did the training you received at the college prepare you for teaching?

1. not at all
2. a little
3. neutral
4. somewhat
5. a great deal

21.b. In what area/field/branch do you feel you were insufficiently prepared?

21.c. What have you done to cope?

1. nothing
2. I am planning to consult with colleagues

3. I am planning to take in-services courses/workshops/training days
 4. I am currently taking an in-services course
22. Which factors enabled your entry to teaching in school?
 23. Which factors are promoting your continuation to teach in school?
 24. Which factors may hinder you from continuing to teach in school?

Appendix B. Follow-Up Telephone Interview (Stage 2)

Based on your answers to the questionnaire, please expand on the following questions (15,16,19,20)

1. An event or incident you experienced in the past year that has heightened your desire to continue teaching at school. Please describe in full detail the event/incident:
 - a. What happened?
 - b. Who was involved (child/parent/staff/etc.)?
 - c. In what way did the event/incident affect you and the others involved?
 - d. How did you respond?
 - e. In what way did it increase your desire to continue teaching?
 - f. If it recurs, would you respond in a similar way?
2. An event or incident you experienced in the past year that has decreased your desire to continue teaching at school. Please describe in full detail the event/incident:
 - a. What happened?
 - b. Who was involved (child/parent/staff/etc.)?
 - c. In what way did the event/incident affect you and the others involved?
 - d. How did you respond?
 - e. In what way did it decrease your desire to continue teaching?
 - f. If it recurs, how would you respond differently?

For respondents who answered that they left or were planning to leave teaching:

3. Please explain the circumstances that led to your decision to leave teaching.
 - a. Were there any specific events or incidents that led to this decision?
 - b. Did anyone in the school staff play a role in this decision?
 - c. Did anything in the school climate or environment play a role in this decision?
 - d. Did any factors in your college training play a role in this decision?
 - e. Were there any others involved? Please explain.

For respondents who answered that they were planning to continue teaching:

3. Please explain the circumstances that led to your decision to leave teaching.
 - a. Were there any specific events or incidents that led to this decision?
 - b. Did anyone in the school staff play a role in this decision?
 - c. Did anything in the school climate or environment play a role in this decision?
 - d. Did any factors in your college training play a role in this decision?
 - e. Were there any others involved? Please explain.

For respondents who rated a high score in satisfaction from teaching:

4. In your questionnaire you gave a high score in satisfaction from teaching. Please explain in detail all the aspects of teaching that bring you satisfaction. What do you specifically enjoy about teaching?

For respondents who rated a low score in satisfaction from teaching:

4. In your questionnaire you gave a low score in satisfaction from teaching. Please explain in detail all the aspects of teaching that you dislike and prevent you from enjoying teaching.

Appendix C. In-Depth Interview (Stage 3)

Similar questions with some adaptations from the questionnaire (Appendix 1) were asked in an individual face to face interview. Answers, beyond yes and no, were followed up with further clarification and expansion questions, and allowed the interviewee to expand upon the issues in the format of a conversation rather than a question/answer survey. (Any adaptations or additional questions are in italics).

1. Gender: M/F
2. Age
3. Family Status: Single/Married/Divorced/Other
4. Are you interested in teaching in the national education system?
5. Do you consider school teaching as your primary source of income? (*Why or why not?*)
6. What age group(s) are you currently teaching?
Kindergarten/Elementary/Middle School/High School
7. In what district?
- 8.a. In how many schools do you teach?
- 8.b. If you teach in one, would you be willing to teach in two schools?
- 8.c. If you teach in one or two, would you be willing to teach in more than two schools to reach a full time salary?
- 9.a. Are you satisfied with the number of teaching hours you received this year?
- 9.b. Would you be interested in receiving more teaching hours? Yes/No
- 10.a. Are the hours you received all in physical education? Yes/No
- 10.b. If not, what additional subject(s) are they in?

Are you satisfied with the allocation of hours and the subjects you are teaching? If you are teaching subjects other than physical education, what do you think of teaching them?

(Follow-up questions depending on answers: Can you support yourself with the salary you are receiving from school? Do you need additional employment?)

11. How did you receive your current teaching position?

Explain in what way you were referred to the school where you are teaching. Describe the interview process. What issues were raised? What issues were not raised and in retrospect should have been raised? What were you promised? Were these promises kept?

Explain your working conditions at the school (facilities, assistance, program)

(Follow up questions depending on answers received: If conditions are poor, have you approached the principal about these difficulties? If no assistance is provided, have you approached senior staff for advice or assistance? If equipment is lacking, do you have a budget, or have you asked the principal to purchase necessary equipment?)

Explain your entry to teaching. Any specific problems or difficulties? How did you cope with these?

12. Are you interested in continuing in your current teaching position?
- 12.b. If yes, please detail the reasons:
- 12.c. If no, please detail the reasons:

13. Please describe the attitude of the senior teachers towards you. How is it expressed? Did you receive any support/guidance from the senior staff? Please provide an example.

(Follow up questions depending on answers: If you received support, from whom? Senior PE teachers? Other subject teachers? Principal? Other staff? In what areas did you receive support? What guidance or advice have you been given? Have these been helpful? Describe instances of such support in as great a detail as you can.

If a negative attitude was reported, from whom? Senior PE teachers? Other subject teachers? Principal? Other staff? Did you ask for guidance or support and it was rejected? Please explain such instances in as great a detail as possible.

14. Which grades do you prefer teaching?
Kindergarten/Elementary/Middle School/High School

Please explain why. Have you had any particular positive or negative experiences with a particular age group?

Describe your relations with the children.

Can you recognize the children's development in the subject? To what extent do you think you have an influence for the interest or motivation in the subject? Do you feel you are educating them beyond physical education?

15. Please describe in detail at least two events/incidents in the past year that have heightened your desire to continue teaching at school?

(Follow up questions if not included in the description: In what way did the event/incident affect you and the others involved? How did you respond? In what way did it increase your desire to continue teaching? If it recurs, would you respond in a similar way?)

16. Please describe in detail at least two events/incidents in the past year that have decreased your desire to continue teaching at school?

(Follow up questions if not included in the description: In what way did the event/incident affect you and the others involved? How did you respond? In what way did it increase your desire to continue teaching? If it recurs, would you respond in a similar way?)

17. Do you enjoy teaching? Describe what you enjoy about teaching.

18. Are you planning to continue teaching next year? Why or why not? Are you planning to do anything differently?

19. To what extent do you feel teacher training prepared you for teaching?

(Follow up questions, regarding gaps in preparation: What are you doing to cope? What would you add to the teacher program? What changes would you suggest to make in future in the teacher training program?)

20. Which factors enabled your entry to teaching in school?

21. Which factors are promoting your continuation to teach in school?

22. Which factors may hinder you from continuing to teach in school?

23. Are there any additional comments you can share about your internship year?

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