Perceptions of Freedom and Commitment as Sources of Self-efficacy Among Pedagogical Advisors

Efrat Kass a & Maureen Rajuan a
a Achva Academic College of Education

Available online: 11 May 2012

To cite this article: Efrat Kass & Maureen Rajuan (2012): Perceptions of Freedom and Commitment as Sources of Self-efficacy Among Pedagogical Advisors, Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, DOI:10.1080/13611267.2012.678973

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2012.678973

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
Perceptions of Freedom and Commitment as Sources of Self-efficacy Among Pedagogical Advisors

Efrat Kass and Maureen Rajuan
Achva Academic College of Education

The perceptions of the role of the pedagogical advisor are multiple and diverse. This amorphous situation places importance on the sense of self-efficacy among those filling this role. Examined in this study was what pedagogical advisors perceive as factors affecting their professional self-efficacy through in-depth interviews of 10 experienced pedagogical advisors of different disciplinary subjects from three teachers colleges in Israel. The main finding is that pedagogical advisors perceive their professional autonomy as a necessary condition for the effective fulfillment of their role. Autonomy allows them to develop their potential in the intrapersonal, interpersonal and organizational domains of their work. Their sense of autonomy is based on a connection between freedom and commitment to the teaching profession. The need for autonomy demands of the pedagogical advisors that they be in a constant state of reflection in order to reinvent and reformulate their roles in response to changing contexts and demands.

Keywords: pedagogical advisor, professional self-efficacy, autonomy, freedom, commitment

Traditionally, the student teaching experience has been characterized by a triadic mentoring relationship consisting of student teacher, cooperating teaching, and pedagogical advisor. While researchers have focused some attention on the role of the cooperating teacher and the perceptions of student teachers in relation to their cooperating teachers (Rajuan, Beijaard & Verloop, 2007; Zanting, Verloop & Vermunt, 2001), there has been less attention given to the role of the pedagogical advisor their self-efficacy.

It is known from the literature that a person with a high sense of self-efficacy performs better on the job and attains higher achievements (Bandura, 1997; Kass, in press). For this reason, it is important to discover how professionals in different jobs view their sense of self-efficacy in connection to certain job-related factors. However, in a review of the literature, we failed to find studies concerning investigation of the sense of self-efficacy among pedagogical advisors. Thus, specifically, our interest in self-efficacy of
pedagogical advisors stemmed from the importance of the role of the pedagogical advisor in the mentoring process, from the complexity of this role in terms of its multiple definitions and amorphous role descriptions and from the fact that no studies on self-efficacy of pedagogical advisors appear to exist in the literature. In addition, it appears that now, more than ever, in times of educational upheaval caused by modernization and change, the multiplicity of roles and tasks required of pedagogical advisors is in need of re-examination and deeper understanding (Ball and Cohen, 1999; Ben-Peretz, 2001).

Our investigation was grounded in a review of the literature that revealed a largely amorphous situation in relation to guidelines and definitions of the role of the pedagogical advisor. The lack of general guidelines concerning the role of the pedagogical advisor poses a difficulty to the investigation of their sense of self-efficacy since self-efficacy is usually studied in relation to specific role definitions. In light of this difficulty, we endeavored to investigate the factors that are perceived by pedagogical advisors to contribute to their sense of self-efficacy beyond specific role definitions (Kass, 2009).

The Role of the Pedagogical Advisor in the Israeli Context

In different countries in the world there are various definitions and terms used to describe the job of those who prepare student teachers and new teachers that include: supervisor, trainer, field instructor, guide, tutor, coach, counselor, mentor, mentor teacher, and advisor. The term that is used in the Israeli context to describe this job position is most closely translated into English as pedagogical guide, counselor, or advisor. The term pedagogical advisor will be used throughout our study to refer to the person from whom student teachers learn and from whom they receive guidance and mentoring (Kenan, Asaf, Hoz, Elam, Bezalel, & Beck, 2004).

In the traditional model as practiced in Israel, the pedagogical advisor comes to each school a number of times over the year in order to promote the teaching ability of the student teachers and to assess their teaching progress. The pedagogical advisor is responsible for arriving at a summative assessment of all student teachers and for mentoring them into their first professional assignment in the internship stage. In this conception, the pedagogical advisor may be seen as both the supporter of the student teachers and the gatekeeper of academic standards of the training institution. These conflicting duties contribute to the difficulty and the complexity of the role. The role derives its nature from two worlds: familiarity with the culture and needs of the school system, on the one hand, and mastery of a body of academic knowledge related to education and pedagogy on the other (Waite, 1995). A pedagogical advisor is a professional teacher educator who belongs to the college or university faculty whose occupation consists of instruction and research in the academic institution as well as pedagogical guidance or
mentoring in the school. This dual role allows student teachers to make the connections between theoretical knowledge learned in the training institution and practical knowledge acquired in the field (Kenan et al., 2004). Predominantly, pedagogical advisors possess an academic background in the specific subject-matter content of the student teachers that they supervise in order to provide the leadership for implementing a curriculum that connects theory with practice (Smith, 2005). Pedagogical advisors are expected to gain an awareness of the possible communication and interpersonal issues related to the traditional triad model of supervision (Slick, 1998) and to serve as a link between the school and the training institution (Kagan & Tippins, 1993). The staff of pedagogical advisors is comprised solely of university or college faculty and there is a faculty member who coordinates and “supervises” the supervisors (Slick, 1998). In the Israeli context, teacher education programs ensure that pedagogical advisors have time in their schedules to discuss important issues and collaborate with cooperating teachers (Koehler, 1988) and to observe lessons and give feedback to student teachers on a regular basis by employing pedagogical advisors on a fulltime basis with access to the regular tenure and promotion tracks of the training institution as provided to all academic lecturers (Smith, 2005). These conditions reflect the recognition of the importance of the student teaching experience and serve to reward all participants involved in the training and mentoring process (Beck & Kosnik, 2002).

Pedagogical advisors in the Israeli context are largely responsible for the recruiting of schools through contacts and negotiations with principals and cooperating teachers and for student teacher placements in the schools, although the training institution itself may occasionally take a more active role in the identification and creation of liaisons with schools in accordance with special projects (Rajuan, in press). For example, following international trends over the last few years, a new kind of partnership has developed in Israel between training institutions and schools called Professional Development Schools (PDS). These partnerships empower the pedagogical advisor who becomes the main figure who mentors student teachers in their personal and professional development by connecting the culture of the training institution with the culture of the school (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Holmes Group, 1990; Kagan & Tippins, 1993). Student teachers in the Israeli context (Millet, 2005) reported that, in the PDS model, pedagogical advisers have a stronger influence on the development of their images as future teachers than their cooperating teachers in the schools. Pedagogical advisors are seen to be in possession of valid knowledge that is used to work in tandem with cooperating teachers to guide and educate student teachers. In conclusion, in the Israeli context, there are few guidelines from the training institution or curriculum set by the Ministry of Education according to which the pedagogical advisor decides what to teach or how to guide student teachers (Smith, 2005).
Various Definitions and Roles of the Pedagogical Advisor

The role of the pedagogical advisor is usually surrounded by an amorphous situation which is expressed in many ways. Some of them include the various titles given to those who fulfill this function, the multiple definitions of the role and the differences between them. There exists no clear set of criteria according to which one can be accepted into the job or follow a course of study in preparation for the job. In addition, it is not clear what pedagogical advisors actually do on the job, which content knowledge they must teach, and in which ways they should mentor student teachers.

In an attempt to define the role of the pedagogical advisor and to set goals and standards for fulfillment of this role, the literature contains many descriptions of the multitude of tasks that the pedagogical advisor is expected to perform. However, the proliferation of definitions and goals contributes to the problematic nature of the job by reflecting what the job appears to be in terms of its complexity in the field and lack of common definition (Kenan et al., 2004). The following studies relate to different perceptions of the role of the pedagogical advisor, but do not investigate self-efficacy in relation to these roles. According to some researchers, the pedagogical advisor should aim to help student teachers develop skills of self-regulation and reflectivity (Cohn & Gelleman, 1988; Gold, 1996; Koster, Brekelmans, Koetsier, Korthagen, & Wubbels, 2003). According to others, the pedagogical advisor should aim at increasing the effectiveness of the student teachers’ instructional behaviors in the classroom and decreasing their ineffective behaviors (Hoover, O’Shea, & Carroll, 1988). There are those who emphasize personal relationships and claim that the role of the pedagogical advisor is to promote the personal development of student teachers by giving them socio-psychological support and to accompany them in areas of personal relationships (Bar-Ziv, 2002; Caires & Ameida, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). There are researchers who view the pedagogical advisor as a researcher whose role is to contribute to professional knowledge about guidance and instruction as members of the academic organization to which they belong (Zilberstein, 2005). There are also those that emphasize the importance of the pedagogical advisor as part of a community of learners who share their accumulated knowledge from experience in teaching (Hanson & Huston, 1995).

One common perception among researchers is that an important role of the pedagogical advisor is to aid student teachers in making connections between their theoretical coursework and their experiences in the field (e.g., Ball, 2000; Clifford, Macy, Albi, Bricker, & Rahn, 2005). One of the ways of doing this is through group meetings with student teachers in which issues relevant to teaching experiences are raised together in a supportive environment (Zahorik, 1988). Some researchers (Slick, 1998; Tate, Curtis, & Kortecamp, 2005) have preferred to focus on the variety of problems and dilemmas that involve ethical and moral decisions which pedagogical advisors face. For
example, pedagogical advisors are often required to set boundaries in order to create appropriate relationships with student teachers serving as figures that inspire trust to ease the relationships between school personnel and student teachers.

Mozen (2005) suggested criteria for the assessment of student teachers by the pedagogical advisor. These include content knowledge, knowledge concerning development and growth, identification of different learning styles, knowledge concerning motives and behaviors of pupils, knowledge concerning communication, preparation for teaching, reflectivity, use of technology and collaboration with colleagues, parents and community members. The pedagogical advisor is seen as responsible for the student teachers’ acquisition of these kinds of knowledge and skills that the teachers college as an organization deems important for teacher professionalism.

**Perceptions of Pedagogical Advisors**

Investigations of the role of the pedagogical advisor from the perceptions of the pedagogical advisors themselves carried out by Imanuel (2005) in the Israeli context show much variability. From their analysis of interviews with pedagogical advisors concerning their roles, it was found that each pedagogical advisor emphasizes a different aspect of the job. Some of the perceptions include emphasis on the pedagogical advisor as promoting student teachers to become experts in their field of knowledge, emphasis on learning from the vast practical experience of the pedagogical advisor, emphasis on the pedagogical advisor as a socialization agent engaged in developing moral-humanistic values, emphasis on the pedagogical advisor as a leader of a professional community of learners or an emphasis on a psychological approach that seeks to inculcate a deep understanding of children and their special needs. Imanuel (2005) concluded that the differences in perceptions may be dependent on the kind of training one receives and the specific goals of the various programs. In general, pedagogical advisors see their role directly in relation to student teachers as part of the process inherent in training new teachers (Caires & Ameida, 2007; Wilson, 2006).

**Professional Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is the internal, subjective feeling of individuals when they decide to perform a certain task, especially when the task is a new one (Bandura, 1997). Before approaching a task, individuals judge their ability to organize and successfully carry out behavior, or a set of behaviors, that will lead to a desirable outcome (Bandura, 2006). There is a differentiation in the literature between high and low levels of self-efficacy and between different sources of self-efficacy as individuals perceive them. Freidman (2003) defined the sense of self-efficacy in this context as the belief of professionals in their ability to
control factors affecting their professional lives. Self-efficacy beliefs often are stronger predictors of achievement outcomes when compared with other competence-related perceptions (Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2004).

There are those, like Bandura (1982, 1986, 1997), who claim that the sense of self-efficacy is dependent upon specific and changing situations and circumstances and is, therefore, a variable state characteristic. Self-efficacy is measured in relation to a role, task or profession. As such, self-efficacy differs from many other expectancy beliefs in that self-efficacy is both more task- and situation-specific and individuals make use of self-efficacy beliefs in reference to some type of goal (Schunk & Pajares, 2002, 2004). The degree of self-efficacy experienced by an individual in relation to a specific task may change from time to time, from place to place and from context to context. Of course, the sense of self-efficacy may also change from task to task. For example, a person may have a high sense of self-efficacy in math, but a low one in sports. Therefore, the assessment of self-efficacy must be done in relation to a specific task and as close in time as possible to the performance of that task. Bandura (1997) claimed that self-efficacy is a multi-modal concept, therefore, making it necessary to design questionnaires for its assessment in connection to specific tasks. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy (1998) extended this line of thinking to teachers and claimed that teachers could feel a high sense of self-efficacy in specific teaching situations in relation to different subject matter, different pupils and different contexts of classroom instruction.

According to a different approach, self-efficacy is a trait characteristic. Barfield and Burlingame (1974) defined self-efficacy as a consistent personality trait that allows individuals to cope with the world in successful ways or to create change. In her study on the sources that build self-efficacy among teachers, Kass (2000) found that when a high sense of self-efficacy is developed in childhood, it forms more of a stable personality trait that is generalized to many tasks, whereas in individuals for whom a low sense of self-efficacy developed in childhood, the sense of self-efficacy is more likely to fluctuate in relation to the specific circumstances of different situations.

When individuals have a low sense of self-efficacy in relation to a specific task, they will avoid activities that they perceive to be beyond their ability and will engage instead in activities that they believe will have a more successful outcome (Bandura, 1997). Those individuals will pay much attention to their lack of ability and will imagine that the situation is more difficult than it actually is. Due to a perceived feeling of threat, these individuals will experience anxiety that will decrease their ability to concentrate on the task that will, consequently, have deleterious effects on their level of performance. In contrast, individuals with high levels of self-efficacy will seek out challenges, continue to persevere despite repeated failures (Schunk, 1984) and assume a relaxed state when approaching novel situations (Bandura, 1982, 2006). Individuals who believe that ability can be
developed will choose more active ways of coping in comparison to individ-
uals who believe that ability is static and unchangeable with no connection
to situations in which they experienced success or failure in the past.

Teachers’ Sense of Self-efficacy

Research on teachers’ self-efficacy has been seen as important for its influ-
ence on the effectiveness of teaching, pupils’ achievements and the rate of
burn-out among teachers (Friedman, 2003). In addition, Imants and Tillema
(1995) found that teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy are more open
to new experiments and innovations, as well as to learning opportunities in
informal settings, and will persevere longer in trying out new teaching stra-
egies and novel techniques for the purpose of solving classroom problems.
However, in contrast, Wheatley (2002) claimed that it is precisely constant
doubt about one’s present sense of self-efficacy that strengthens teachers’
motivation for continued learning and growth.

In relation to teachers, researchers have pointed to different sources that
influence their sense of self-efficacy. A summary of some of these sources
include the level of learning ability of the pupils and the image of the
school in relation to the achievements of its pupils, the sense of belonging
to the professional community, the amount of pressure felt in the school, the
amount of participation in decision-making, the leadership style of the prin-
cipal, the amount of collaborative work with colleagues, rewards and sup-
port, feedback from supervisors and parents, the amount of autonomy given
to the teacher in the classroom and the amount of control that teachers feel
they have over their work conditions (Kass & Friedman, 2005).

The multitude of factors led Friedman and Kass (2002) to propose an
extended model of teacher self-efficacy that goes beyond teachers’ work in the
classroom and includes teachers as individuals who take part in tasks and
interrelations connected to the school as an organization. In their research car-
ried out on K-12 teachers, Friedman and Kass (2002) found that self-efficacy
of teachers relates to two domains, that of the classroom and that of the school
as an organization. In both domains, the teacher has to perform professional
tasks and to be involved in interpersonal relationships. In the classroom
domain, the teacher imparts knowledge, functions as an educator, and handles
both formal and informal aspects of his or her relationships with the students.
This context includes quality teaching, effective classroom management and
generating cognitive, moral and social change in their students. As an organi-
zational person, the teacher may possibly seek influence and active involve-
ment in performing organization-related tasks (involvement in decision
making, inner circles membership, confidence in maneuvering around the
organizational maze, ascending the school hierarchy), as well as establishing
positive relations with colleagues and members of the administration and
assertiveness when coping with the school’s administration demands.
Purpose
Many researchers have measured self-efficacy based on specific role definitions chosen by researchers. Our research question emerged out of the literature which shows that there is no accepted definition of the role of the pedagogical advisor. For this reason, we were interested in investigating pedagogical advisors’ sense of self-efficacy as influenced by the individual’s perception of the role. Therefore, the main research question was: What do pedagogical advisors perceive as the dominant factor contributing to their sense of professional self-efficacy? A secondary question, based on the findings of Freidman and Kass (2002), was asked at the end of the interviews in cases in which this subject did not emerge spontaneously on the part of the participants: How do organizational factors influence the sense of self-efficacy of pedagogical advisors?

Method
We used a qualitative approach to respond to the research question since there is very little knowledge about this subject in the existing literature (Miriam & Simpson, 1995). This approach allows for the most open and direct way of investigating what gives rise to pedagogical advisors’ sense of self-efficacy from their own perspective with no pre-existing assumptions or hypotheses on the part of the researchers. We decided to collect data through open in-depth interviews rather than self-report questionnaires. Much of the research on self-efficacy in general, and on K-12 teachers specifically, has been based on self-reported quantitative ratings of confidence levels (Wheatley, 2002). Although self-report is based on the perceptions of the participants, the questionnaires are limited to issues chosen by the researchers. Data that are collected in open-depth interviews that elicits the free articulation of the participants leads to individual interpretations of perceptions of self-efficacy that have been largely overlooked. Such qualitative studies often lead to findings that are unanticipated by researchers. Extending efficacy research to the qualitative study of underlying influences and sources of self-efficacy and the connections between the different factors responds to the observation that teacher efficacy may go beyond those things measured by teacher efficacy scales (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Moreover, an emphasis on such qualitative interpretations is consistent with the position that meanings are the proper emphasis of psychological research because meanings are what influence and motivate human action (Bruner, 1990). More concretely, studying qualitative interpretations is necessary because different personal meanings of efficacy will often influence teachers and teaching in quite different ways in different contexts. We investigated the factors that influence the way pedagogical advisors in the Israeli context perceive their sense of professional self-efficacy through the way they make meaning of their role.
Participants and Setting

In order to arrive at a random sample representative of pedagogical advisors in Israeli teachers colleges, sampling procedures were based on Morse’s (2007) second and third principles of sampling for qualitative inquiry. Principle two is that it is necessary to locate excellent participants to obtain excellent data. Principle three is that sampling techniques must be targeted and efficient. Therefore, snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961), a technique that assures a strong compatibility with Morse’s principles, was used in our study. Recruitment of pedagogical advisors for participation in this study was done according to personal connections with acquaintances in three different training institutions in different geographical locations in Israel. Those acquaintances were asked to recommend other pedagogical advisors in their institutions which the interviewer subsequently contacted. Pedagogical advisors from different disciplinary programs were approached by the first researcher and asked whether they would agree to take part in research concerning the role of the pedagogical advisor. Participants from a wide range of programs were sought in order not to bias the findings according to a specific program orientation. All of the pedagogical advisors approached, save one, agreed readily and willingly to take part in the study.

Ten pedagogical advisors from three different training institutions participated in the study from different disciplinary programs: pre-school education, special education, mathematical education, academic retraining program and honors program. Most of the pedagogical advisors worked according to the more traditional model of training in which guidance of student teachers was carried out on an individual basis in a number of schools. Only a few worked according to the Professional Development Model (PDS) in which group guidance was given to student teachers who were placed in one school. All participants carried out their work in elementary schools.

The ages of the participating pedagogical advisors, all females, ranged from 37 to 58 with an average age of 49.4. Their tenure in the teaching profession ranged from 10 to 35 years with an average of 21.5 years, i.e., they were all very experienced teachers. Regarding their experience as pedagogical advisors, they also had much experience, ranging from 6 to 20 years with an average of 11.8 years. Two of the pedagogical advisors had MA degrees and the other seven had PhD degrees. None of the pedagogical advisors had any formal training in preparation for the job. One of the pedagogical advisors took a course in pedagogical supervision given by the Mofet Institute of Teacher Education during the duration of her job. Three of the participating pedagogical advisors had formerly held the position of head of a pedagogical stream and two of them had formerly been in charge of special programs in their training institution. All of the participants had tenure at their training institution. Two worked a half-time position and the others had full-time positions as pedagogical advisors.
The majority of the interviews took place in the homes of the pedagogical advisors in order for them to experience a relaxed and comfortable environment and to save them the time and effort of travel. Three of the interviews took place at the colleges in which the participants worked in a quiet room with no distractions.

**Research Tool**

The research tool was an open in-depth interview conducted by the first author that lasted between 1 to 1.5 hours. Participants’ responses were taped and transcribed by the interviewer. In the first stage of the interview, the opening prompt was, “Tell me about your professional story as a pedagogical advisor”. The interviewer refrained from intervention as much as possible and only asked questions occasionally to elicit examples or clarifications when needed.

In the second stage, after the open interview, the interviewer exposed the main research question as, “What specifically helped to build your sense of self-efficacy as a pedagogical advisor?” She asked whether the participant had anything to add in direct relation to this issue. The purpose of this question was to further explore the participants’ understanding of how their own sense of self-efficacy had developed with no connection to the perceived strength of self-efficacy.

In addition, and in accordance with previous findings (Freidman & Kass, 2002), the interviewer asked a secondary question about the influence of various institutional and national programs and reforms currently taking place in Israel in relation to teacher education in an attempt to explore another possible influence in the shaping of self-efficacy. Moreover, and in line with naturalistic critical perspectives (Carspecken, 1996), the understanding of the participants’ replies was further checked for validity and reliability through member checks (presenting interpretations to participants to verify that they viewed events in the ways understood by the researcher).

**Analysis**

The findings were analyzed according to grounded theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that allowed for retention of the exact words of the seldom-heard participants as data from which categories emerged. In the first stage, the coding system was developed by open coding of the concepts that were found and repeated in the quotations of each interview. The concepts that emerged were recorded alongside the quotations in the coding notes. Statements and expressions that were similar and repeated were grouped according to more general concepts in order to arrive at a dominant category on which to base the
foundation of the theory. The major category that emerged was the category of autonomy.

In the second stage the interviews were compared. Similar concepts that recurred throughout the different interviews were combined to build sub-categories. The process was an ongoing one of working back and forth between the general theory and the specific quotations. The three sub-categories that emerged were identified as the intra-personal, inter-personal and organizational sense of self-efficacy.

Finally, each sub-category was further divided into themes by going back and forth between the data and our interpretation in an attempt to build a theory that would encompass the phenomenon under study. Inter-judge agreement between the two authors was implemented to strengthen the reliability of the findings. In each sub-category, we focus below on the major themes perceived by the interviewees as influencing their professional self-efficacy as it connects to their perceptions of their roles.

Results

The dominant category of autonomy emerged as the main factor impacting pedagogical advisors’ sense of professional self-efficacy. This category was expressed quantitatively by the participants in the large number of times that the category emerged spontaneously throughout the transcripts, as well as qualitatively in the emphatic expression surrounding the theme. The results pointed to autonomy in three domains of the work of the pedagogical advisors interviewed. These sub-categories were the intra-personal, the inter-personal and the organizational domains. In each sub-category, we identified connections between freedom and commitment, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
The Different Expressions of Autonomy in Three Sub-categories of Self-efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Freedom</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intra-personal self-efficacy sub-category</td>
<td>Trait characteristic: Need for challenge and creativity for personal satisfaction. Need for freedom to respond to ethical issues.</td>
<td>“True to oneself”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-personal self-efficacy sub-category</td>
<td>State characteristic: Response to relationships with student teachers in changing contexts</td>
<td>“True” to student teachers as individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational self-efficacy sub-category</td>
<td>Lack of dictates concerning academic content and methods of guidance</td>
<td>“True” to professional standards in relation to colleagues and institution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intra-Personal Characteristics of Self-efficacy

The majority of pedagogical advisors described their sense of self-efficacy as autonomy on an intra-personal level. According to their quotations, we understood their need for inner freedom as a personal characteristic that they identified in themselves as a personality trait preceding and extending beyond the situational state of their job:

I have this problem that I am a real individualist and I need my own corner.

Freedom is also feeling free inside. Outside freedom is not enough. When there is no freedom, that’s a problem, it’s impossible, it doesn’t work.

Each pedagogical advisor is different, comes from a different background of life experiences, from a different world with a different set of beliefs and that’s why each one must be allowed to work according to his/her own characteristics.

Participants described freedom as something that they brought to the job. This sense of autonomy seems to stem from an internal need to constantly undergo renewal in the job, “to feel fresh” and “to create new ways and new experiences”, in their own words, that contribute to their personal satisfaction:

An undefined situation is, for me, not a bad thing. I am not afraid of freedom. I actually like amorphousness because that strengthens in me the ability to create, the ability to initiate, the ability to do what I think is right, and it increases my freedom. It doesn’t take away from my feeling of confidence; sometimes, it actually strengthens it.

In relation to their job description, some of the pedagogical advisors mentioned freedom as a personality trait that, while originating within them, became stronger over the years in reaction to their past educational experiences. They spoke of the desire not to replicate an outdated, standardized model of teaching imposed by someone else, but to offer a personalized model of one’s own choosing, that they tried to impart to their students:

My job is to say to the students, “Ladies and gentlemen, you have taken on the hardest profession that there is! First, because there are no recipes. Second, because the reality in the schools is getting harder from day to day. Third, because you, as a person, have to be true to yourself”.

One respondent spoke about her motivation for becoming a pedagogical advisor as stemming from a long-held desire to make changes in the educational system.

Respondents articulated the idea that students should get to know themselves and that they perceived their job as a role model of a “good teacher” based on an individualized approach: “I think that those that want to become teachers should develop in themselves this autonomy because, otherwise, they won’t be good teachers”.

12 KASS AND RAJUAN
Some of the respondents gave examples of advice they had given to younger pedagogical advisors when asked for help, recalling their own lack of confidence in the early stages of their work as pedagogical advisors:

I give you all the materials, but I want you to find your place among them! Why? Because when you find your place, you will swim like a fish in water! Within the impossible ocean of knowledge, you have to teach what means the most to you, closest to your worldview that brings out your best abilities.

You have to know where you are going in order to lead others there.

Whereas the large majority of respondents were aware of the high degree of autonomy given them in their role as pedagogical advisors, some also mentioned the need to take an active stance to ensure that autonomy would not be revoked: “I took autonomy for myself”. Another respondent mentions that a major threat to her continuation in the job would be the lack of autonomy that she is accustomed to: “and that may be the reason that I would be forced to leave”.

The need for inner freedom also emerged as an ethical sense when faced with moral decisions regarding others. Respondents mentioned dilemmas as part of their claim that they must have autonomy to make decisions that affect people’s lives. One example describes the decision of whether a student should be allowed to continue her studies or be told to leave:

There are many open questions is this whole issue concerning the effectiveness of pedagogical supervision, lots! And because there are so many open questions, I felt that I could do what I wanted to internally, ethically, what I needed to do. And, really, I feel that I acted over the years from a deep sense of ethical commitment to the profession.

This respondent added that the responsibility of decision-making is very serious in light of the fact that students today will affect children’s lives in the future. She added that she often feels the burden of making certain decisions because, despite her many years of experience, she admits that “she still doesn’t know who will be a successful teacher and who will fail in the job”.

An overriding perspective of their job leads pedagogical advisors to identify with the larger goals and values embedded in their perspective of education and render their role as one that goes beyond the specific context. For this reason, an ideological sense of inner commitment emerged as a guiding principle among the majority of pedagogical advisors interviewed. Respondents were not only guided by a larger ideological perspective for their own sense of self-efficacy, but wished to convey this to their students: “I succeeded in passing on to the students, which I think is the most important thing, my deep commitment to the profession”.
Inter-personal Characteristics of Self-efficacy

All respondents saw the focus of their work on the student teachers as future teachers. For this reason, relationship-building, development of trust and empowerment of student teachers emerged as themes in this category.

Some participants spoke of the knowledge accumulated over the years as the basis for providing solutions to the variety of problems presented by student teachers:

Students are people, not part of the learning material.

The interaction with the students is not a model. You have a student before you; what is a model? What is a model of guidance? When you come to see him/her... It cannot be based on a model. The model is the interaction. You need the interaction with each student. That is the inner core of guidance. And in pedagogical guidance, I don’t think it’s possible to work without freedom of choice to guide this student or that one. There is no other possibility, but through the interaction. A person stands before you who is unique, something different from others.

The freedom to build interrelationships with the student teachers as the pedagogical advisor sees fit influences the ability to build relationships of trust. The following example shows how one pedagogical advisor changed the student–advisor framework that student teachers are accustomed to in order to fit her conception of the training relationship as a more respectful one:

And I put a lot of trust in the students. From the beginning, there is trust. They were really surprised when I asked them when I could come to observe them. I opened my diary and we made an appointment for me to come. It was really hard for them to accept that at the beginning, but then they got over it.

In relation to student teachers, the respondents perceived the nurturing of relationships and the task of teaching academic material and providing pedagogical supervision as integrated and complementary. They explained the need for academic freedom in teaching materials in relation to how best to individualize instruction according to the needs of the student teachers in order to develop interpersonal relationships with them. This was seen to exist in guidance sessions, as well as in pedagogy lessons:

This freedom to move about among different kinds of knowledge and come up with the right solution for this student is what builds trust.

The focus on individualization of instruction according to the awareness of various stages of student teacher development also emerged as a concern of some of the participants:
I always insisted on teaching first-year because that is the basis, the year of the building blocks, the year of creation. I think of the metaphor of molding clay—that is, in essence, the first formation, but the most significant one.

The following respondent conveys the same message concerning the perspective of transmitting a personalized model of teaching, although her conclusion about teacher candidates is quite different:

From my experience, young students in the regular training program don’t have the maturity of those in the retraining program to not work according to recipes, but to understand the complexity and find their own way according to what they believe.

Some of the respondents spoke about their commitment to the students and how the freedom to constantly search for new materials and methods prevents them from becoming “boring in their lessons” and aids them in creating “models of teaching the way teaching should be taught”.

Organizational Characteristics of Self-efficacy

The organizational realm of self-efficacy was found to exist among our respondents in the contexts of the training institutions to which they belong and the various schools in which they carry out their practical work. In relation to organizational factors, one respondent describes the diversity of school settings in which she works and sees this as a reason for the need to respond differentially within a variety of workplaces:

Because each time that person is different when you see him in totally different situations. When I would give feedback in Kiryat Malachi, for example, it was totally different from when I would give feedback in Ashdod because the environment and the school system is different and coping with them is different.

In relation to the organization of the college, pedagogical advisors mentioned their relationships with their pedagogical teams at the colleges often. While recalling some advantages of sharing experiences with professionals who were seen to understand the specific challenges of the job, the large majority rejected the idea that they would agree to decisions made by a staff of their peers:

Today I think that there should be more academic freedom because a pedagogical advisor teaches what she believes is right, or what she perceives as teaching.

Although many voiced their strong conviction that academic freedom must be retained, a few acknowledged the need for some uniting principles
of standardization of curriculum to connect the work of the pedagogical advisors working in the same organizational setting:

I think there should be a core because there are things that you can’t eliminate. I don’t have total freedom. I guess that when you build a good framework, or a good core program, there are things that are seen as universal knowledge concerning what should be included in the process of training teachers.

Another respondent mentioned the need for coordination between the different years of the program “because second and third year students have different needs”.

The large majority did not mention administrators or other college staff as significant to their sense of self-efficacy in relation to their work. When asked about outside influences, they voiced the opinion that, rather than seeing organizational reforms as a threat, they were largely unconcerned or welcomed them as an opportunity for renewal. Some even felt that demands for innovation might serve as a welcome challenge to them to refresh their own thinking and ways of doing things:

Professional development includes understanding all the vagueness and also clarifying all the vagueness. To create the direction, the agenda, to check it all the time, to constantly check yourself, to be reflective, to keep updated in the academic journey, in order to see and check what is happening in the world, what is happening in other learning environments, what is happening in other professions.

In relation to the organizational domain of their work, one respondent told of her transition from a traditional model of training to the Professional Development School model that was organized by the training institution:

I want to tell you about the change I went through when I started the PDS project. I had no choice but to learn new materials and ways of doing things on my own. I learned a lot, I read a lot, I experimented a lot. I coped with things that I had never had to deal with before.

Another respondent supports this process of renewal in her encounter with PDS:

I re-evaluated everything I had done. I went back to the basic material that I learned many years ago and I saw that it had a lot to offer in the way of solving the deeper problems of connecting theory to practice.

Despite initial difficulties in coping with organizational changes related to the PDS model, respondents coped and succeeded:

I think that when I entered something that I hadn’t known before, I had to go deeper and learn it and see it, I fell down and picked myself up and was thrown around by it, but today I think that I went with it to places that promoted me, first of all, and also my students.
Respondents mentioned the large responsibility they felt towards their profession and other professionals for the purpose of upholding the high standards they believed to prevail. Some expressed concern over the possibility that some professionals working in their field may exploit the degree of autonomy given to them. They perceived this as a threat to their own professional standing, thereby, legitimizing the need for the implementation of a framework: “I think there should be a framework. That’s why I give 50 percent to a framework because I am afraid of charlatanism”.

Discussion
As mentioned previously, we found no research on the self-efficacy of pedagogical advisors or of other equivalent names for this role. In the context of this void, some believe that there is a need to define the role of the pedagogical advisor. The desire to define the role is based on the need to formalize, unite and create a common language for those who engage in the profession as well as to set standards by which to hold professionals accountable. However, the question is raised as to what extent the standardization of the role of the pedagogical advisor would limit the freedom of pedagogical advisors to create their own sense of self-efficacy that may have ramifications on their effective functioning and sense of professional competence as a result.

The answer to this issue, as expressed by the participants of this study, was a strong need for autonomy. The main theme of autonomy as a source of self-efficacy that recurred throughout the interviews appeared in relation to the three domains of their work that emerged from the data: the intra-personal, the inter-personal and the organizational domains. In addition, autonomy was always described in connection to commitment. Rather than dictates coming from outside forces, participants described their commitments as chosen goals and ideals. We comment upon the three domains in the following discussion and attempt to explain the connections between them.

The first theme that emerged from the data was the sense of autonomy as a source of self-efficacy on an intra-personal level. Kass (2000) found that when a high sense of self-efficacy is developed in childhood, it forms more of a stable personality trait that is generalized to other tasks, whereas in individuals for whom a low sense of self-efficacy developed in childhood, their sense of self-efficacy will fluctuate in relation to specific circumstances of different situations. The participants of our study claimed that their need for autonomy is an inner personality trait that keeps them fresh and creative in their changing job roles. This may explain the connection between self-efficacy and autonomy among pedagogical advisors who remain in the job for many years. There appears to be a match between a core personality trait and a process that serves to strengthen this personality trait of autonomy that
accompanies pedagogical advisors throughout the years of gaining experience in the job. As a result, those that remain in the job seem to develop a high sense of self-efficacy that is based on autonomy to find creative ways to control a variety of amorphous situations as part of their normal job conditions. This is supported by Friedman’s (2003) definition of self-efficacy as the belief of professionals in their ability to control factors affecting their professional lives.

The second theme that emerged from the data is described as interpersonal relationships with student teachers. In the Israeli context, we found that the focus of pedagogical advisors is on the student teachers who take center stage in varying contexts of the academic and school settings. Pedagogical advisors perceive their student teachers as future teachers and, therefore, strive to develop relationships of trust with them. In addition, they wish to empower their student teachers. Freedom to design their own job description allows pedagogical advisors to relate to each student teacher in an individualized manner in accordance with their specific needs. Freedom to create their own role also enables pedagogical advisors to present their student teachers with role models of flexible and autonomous future teachers.

While work with student teachers may have many aspects in common with good classroom teaching, adult-to-adult interactions are sensitive to many unique professional factors, such as age, power, role, judgment, relational trust, perceptions of competence and others (Moir, Barlin, Gless, & Miles, 2009). Moir et al. added that interactions take place in a delicate professional environment over which those who engage in mentoring have little control, especially when compared with the act of teaching pupils behind closed doors. This seems to differentiate pedagogical advisors from teachers who are largely dependent upon the context of their classroom and school organization for feelings of self-efficacy (Friedman & Kass, 2002). Pedagogical advisors perceived the ongoing need to integrate relationships with student teachers with the tasks of academic instruction and pedagogical guidance.

The third theme, described by Friedman and Kass (2002) as the organizational domain, further differentiates the work of the pedagogical advisor from that of the teacher. While for teachers, the school is the organization in which they work, for pedagogical advisors, the school is only one part of their organizational domain, as has been mentioned. Practically, pedagogical advisors take part in the educational work of many schools and, while feeling connected to these schools, do not see themselves, and are not seen by school personnel, as being a formal part of any of the schools. In addition, they seldom mentioned relationships with those directly above them in administrative positions. In contrast to K-12 teachers who perceive their principals as a significant influence on their sense of self efficacy, the nature of pedagogical advisors’ job description as academic goes beyond K-12 teachers’ practical aspects of teaching and involvement in the school context. The fact that pedagogical advisors do not perceive their organizational
management as a factor influencing their sense of self-efficacy can explain the reason for their indifference to the demands of organizational change. From this, we may infer that pedagogical advisors of our study have high levels of self-efficacy and are, therefore, more open to new experiments and innovations (Imants & Tillema, 1995).

In addition, pedagogical advisors are different from other lecturers at teachers colleges, by virtue of their intense involvement in the practical aspects of teaching in the school system. The perception of self-efficacy based on autonomy may explain the special relationship reported by pedagogical advisors to their professional teams of colleagues: collaboration with them, but not identification with a prescribed set of goals and values. Pedagogical advisors reported that they could not accept staff decisions of their colleagues (the other pedagogical advisors) regarding many aspects of their work, while agreeing that general guidelines should be instituted. The main characteristic of pedagogical advisors’ relationship with their professional colleagues, the other pedagogical advisors in the college, is based on an understanding that collaborative reflection is useful to them, as long as they are allowed to make the final decisions regarding what to do, in the long run.

In summary of the organizational aspects, pedagogical advisors, by virtue of the nature of their job, are accustomed to relating to the macro-level of their work in which colleges, schools and related personnel have to be juggled in an ongoing acrobatics of changing circumstances and conditions. This juggling act can only be successfully performed in an autonomous way by those who have gained the experience to recognize the immediate conditions of their work in the present and to adapt effectively and quickly to its changing demands (Ben-Peretz, 2001). It explains their lack of fear of new college and national programs that call for innovation and change, as exemplified by the transition to PDS models of student teaching. Belonging to two educational contexts, the college and the school system, reflects the ongoing challenge of bridging theory and practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999). This translates into an ongoing autonomous search for blending the needs of student teachers with the requirements of academic learning, nurturing relationships between school personnel and college staff and finding one’s own place in the mix. Because the pedagogical advisors perceive their autonomy as the main factor building self-efficacy, changes in national reforms or new college programs present little threat and are often seen as challenges. Pedagogical advisors depend on their own ability to preserve their sense of autonomy in times of change and to make changes in accordance with their needs for personal freedom and professional commitment.

Efficacy as the final stage of mentor development, according to Casey and Claunch (2005), consists of many of the descriptions produced by the pedagogical advisors interviewed in our study: developing a personal mentoring style, recognizing personal strengths, continuing to reflect on and adjust to multiple strategies, making an emotional shift to detachment and
minimal response, deepening the understanding of effective teaching and moving from intuitive to intentional practice. The participants of our study report ongoing tension between the freedom to remain “true to themselves” and commitment to the larger ideology of the profession. This results in the continuous need for reflection and creativity and supports Wheatley’s (2002) claim that it is precisely constant doubt about one’s present sense of self-efficacy that strengthens motivation for continued learning and growth.

A strong sense of self-efficacy based on autonomy among pedagogical advisors may be seen as their professional tool in an ever-changing micro landscape of schools, college personnel and local requirements, as well as a changing macro landscape of policies, technologies and ideologies in the global educational field (Ben-Peretz, 2001; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). Commitment to the role of pedagogical advisor goes beyond commitment to the specific schools and colleges in which they work, thus their articulation of their job description as ideological. This brings us full circle to the amorphous definitions and descriptions of the role of the pedagogical advisor in the literature that must include all the multiple requirements and possibilities to allow these professionals to fulfill their role as they perceive it in their specific, ever-changing contexts.

Support for this thesis would be strengthened by comparison with beginning pedagogical advisors, as well as longitudinal studies that follow pedagogical advisors through the trajectory of their careers. In this study, pedagogical advisors mention recollections that shed light on their early experiences of lack of confidence in the job in comparison with their present feelings of self-efficacy based on their ability to utilize the great degree of autonomy given for their own personal satisfaction and professional expertise. Further research questions could focus on the retention of pedagogical advisors in the job compared to those who leave it, the degree of mentoring support needed in the early stages to strengthen the sense of self-efficacy in light of the need to develop a strong sense of autonomy and whether a core personality trait of autonomy is a necessary requirement for the recruitment of new pedagogical advisors.

In conclusion, we found the sense of autonomy underlying self-efficacy of pedagogical advisors to be strong on the intra-personal, the inter-personal and the organizational levels of their perceptions of their work domains. Our research, performed in Israel, showed that self-efficacy of pedagogical advisors is perceived by them in relation to their own personal characteristics and interrelationships with their student teachers that are strongly integrated with the tasks of academic instruction and pedagogical supervision. Organizational factors have little influence on their sense of self-efficacy because they rely on their ability to respond creatively to changing demands of the organization. In lieu of this, respondents perceived a strong connection between their need for inner freedom and their commitment to a larger outside context of professionalism.
Finally, we want to emphasize that freedom to define their own role as the source of pedagogical advisors’ sense of professional self-efficacy emerged as the main finding of this study. Therefore, the fact that the role of the pedagogical advisor is multiple and amorphous, as shown in the literature review, is an important aspect of the training context that needs to be retained in order to allow pedagogical advisors in the Israeli context to strengthen their sense of professional self-efficacy. External restrictions that place restraints on the role of the pedagogical advisor’s job, rendering the role uniform and clearly defined, would limit pedagogical advisor’s ability to create and strengthen their sense of professional self-efficacy based on their own professional beliefs and commitments.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the Mofet Institute for Teacher Education, Israel for funding the present study.

Notes on Contributors

Efrat Kass, PhD in educational counseling, is a senior lecturer in Achva Academic College in Israel. She was formerly the head of the Department of Special Education. Her research activities are focused on teachers’ self-efficacy, bibliotherapy, motivation to teaching career choice, and qualitative research. She has published many articles and two books in Hebrew. In 2007 she has co-authored a book on bibliotherapy in the prevention of eating disorders and in 2012 has published her book on professional self-efficacy in teaching.

Dr. Maureen Rajuan is a teacher trainer and a senior lecturer in the English Department of Achva Academic College in Israel. She received her doctorate from Eindhoven Technological University in The Netherlands. She also teaches EFL and translates academic manuscripts from Hebrew to English.

References


