

2021

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### Recommended Citation

Leshem, S., Carmel, R., Badash, M., & Topaz, B. (2021). Learning Transformation Perceptions of Preservice Second Career Teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(5). Retrieved from <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol46/iss5/5>

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## Learning Transformation Perceptions of Preservice Second Career Teachers

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*Abstract: Teachers' shortage has become a critical issue in most countries in the world. One of the solutions has been the initiation of short-term teacher education programmes which attract adult career changers who enter the programme with prior working experiences and world knowledge. However, the process of transferring previous knowledge is challenging and teachers need to navigate new horizons. The aim of the study is to identify shifts in students' perceptions regarding the teaching profession, and what experiences prompted the shifts. The research was conducted among 15 students in a teacher education college in Israel. The analysis of interviews exposed five main themes where students displayed shifts of perceptions. The themes relate directly to the two interrelated key concepts of second career teachers and transformative learning. The synergy between the two concepts created tension, dilemmas and dissonances which generated spaces for learning and fertile ground for shifting in frame of reference.*

### Introduction

Teachers' shortage has become a critical issue in most countries in the world. One of the solutions has been the initiation of special short-term teacher education training programmes which attract adult career changers who would like to take up teaching (Donitsa-Schmidt & Zuzovsky 2016; Richardson & Watt, 2005; Tigchelaar et al., 2008; Ramot & Donitsa-Schmidt, 2021). Second career teachers enter the programme with prior working experiences, they bring with them maturity, professionalism, world knowledge and transferable skills (Resta et al., 2001; Tigchelaar et al., 2008). However, the process of transferring previous knowledge or skills is quite challenging and teachers need to navigate new horizons. Research shows that at the beginning they act predominantly within their former horizons (Tigchelaar et al., 2008), with the need 'to develop a completely new way of making sense of self within a 'teaching frame of reference' (Snyder et al., 2013, p. 621). The process of shifting from one professional mindset to another entails considerable mental and emotional effort and depends on each person's background and experiences (Powers, 2002).

Our study focuses on learning transformation perceptions of second career teachers who joined an accelerated retraining programme for English teachers initiated by the Ministry of Education in Israel. The teachers in the retraining programme were academics holding a degree in different fields, who are proficient in the English language. It is argued that second career teachers are an intriguing group for teacher education programmes as they differ from first career teachers regarding their experience (Mayotte, 2003; Tigchelaar et al., 2008), demographic, academic and occupational profiles (Donitsa-Schmidt & Weinberger, 2014) and in the way they learn (Knowles, 1980; Mezirow, 2000a).

The aim of the study is to identify shifts in second career teachers' perceptions regarding the teaching profession, and what experiences in the programme prompted the shifts. Teacher education programmes need to recognize the needs of second career teachers, look more profoundly into their experiences and processes of learning, due to their unique characteristics as adult learners. Adult learners bring with them an abundance of world knowledge and competences that might enrich programmes and answer the need for more 'good teachers' for our schools. Our theoretical framework is based upon the concept of second career teachers as adult learners and Mezirow's theory of knowledge transformation which is seen as a particular type of adult learning (Mezirow & Marsick, 1978; Mezirow, 1978, 1991, 2000a, 2000b). Research into career change teachers as 'student teachers' is still limited and studying second career teachers' perceptions during their process of 'becoming teachers' (Williams, 2010, p. 639) can contribute to understanding their development in the profession and can help teacher educators and curriculum designers better cater for these teachers' needs.

## **Theoretical Perspectives**

### **Second Career Teachers**

Second career teachers (SCTs) are people who come into teaching as a second career-choice (Lovett, 2007). They are known as 'professionals who leave their jobs to become a teacher' (Tigchelaar et al., 2010, p. 165). They are described as professionals in their decision-making considerations, their life experience, wisdom, maturity and working habits, in comparison to young teachers who have chosen teaching as a first career (Richardson & Watt, 2006). Their contributions are 'hard to quantify values of maturity and worldliness' (Halladay, 2008, p.17), and they are highly regarded by the education community (Varadharajan & Schuck, 2017). As university graduates, they are more educated and often exhibit high motivation and higher academic abilities (Donitsa-Schmidt & Zuzovsky, 2016) bringing with them a valuable mix of personal and professional attributes.

Studies indicate that they show a passion for teaching (Gore, 2016) and are more resilient and committed to the profession when employed in challenging schools (Donaldson, 2012). It is also stated that 'second career teachers are and will be a significant part of the profession's renewal' (Varadharajan et al., 2018, p. 739). This trend can be partly explained by real-world knowledge, work experience and organizational skills these teachers bring to the classrooms (Trent, 2018).

Studies which looked at career changers' reasons for choosing teaching found that reasons vary according to age, circumstances and other variables, however, choices were not 'whimsical' but well considered (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003, p. 96). A review by Tigchelaar et al. (2010) shows that there are many challenges involved in SCTs' training process as well as in their professional development. These include mainly gaps between their intrinsic

altruistic motivation and the reality of stress, heavy workload and assimilation challenges into school culture (Tigchelaar et al., 2010). The capital they arrive with could be beneficial for the school and students and yet place them in a high-risk position due to rigidity of habits, which are difficult to change (Madfes, 1989). In addition, some researchers have raised doubts regarding the conventional assumptions that the transfer of SCTs existing skills to teaching is an unproblematic process and that their previous practical experience translates naturally into beneficial teaching practices (Tigchelaar et al., 2008). This gave rise to recommendations to adapt programmes to career changers' previous experiences and characteristics and to incorporate learning support, which is better tailored to their abilities (Varadharajan, 2014).

### **Second Career Teachers in Israel**

There is growing enthusiasm of many educational authorities in Israel to recruit SCTs. A large number of Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programmes have been initiated to address the shortage and turnover of teachers (Donitsa-Schmindt & Zuzovsky, 2016) and to fast track teachers for schools. In 2017-2018, the Ministry of Education in Israel allocated funds to facilitate the recruitment and retraining of such candidates specifically to meet the shortage of English Foreign Language teachers (Ministry of Education, 2017, 2018).

In Israel, English is perceived as a valuable asset associated with prestige and economic welfare (Ben Rafael & Sternberg, 2001; Or & Shohamy, 2017). It is the first foreign language studied throughout the school system in all sectors, and a requirement for entering higher education. English language teachers are in high demand in the Israeli educational system yet, schools suffer from a growing shortage of qualified English teachers, mainly caused by early attrition of quality teachers. Similar to many countries such as USA, Australia, Canada and China, there is a high percentage of teachers, who leave the profession before retirement. According to estimates, between 30-40% of beginning teachers in Israel leave the profession within the first 5 years (Arviv-Elyashiv & Zimmerman, 2013).

Given the challenges SCTs potentially face in their training process and later in their transition into the classroom, and to avoid their early attrition once they begin their teaching career, there is need for further research in the field. It is crucial to gain greater understanding of SCTs to develop strategies that address their unique needs (Haggard et al., 2006) and explore their motives, aspirations, and beliefs (Lamming & Horne, 2013).

### **Transformative Learning**

Transformative Learning (TL) is a particular type of adult learning (Mesirow, 1991, 2000b) which affects change on frames of reference. Frames of reference are acquired assumptions and belief systems through which adults define their world and interpret their experiences. They embrace cognitive, conative, and emotional components. A change in frames of reference occurs through critical reflection as well as when assumptions are threatened or challenged. Mezirow (1997), supported by recent studies (Leal et al., 2018), states that becoming critically reflective is key to learning transformation. When frames of references are challenged, individuals might experience emotions such as uncertainty and anxiety (Dirkx et al., 2006; Nogueiras & Iborra, 2017). However, individuals might find it difficult to change frames of reference as they become so deeply rooted that only powerful disorienting situations could shake

them (Christie et al., 2015). Moreover, adult learners bring to their learning experiences and preconceptions that younger learners have not yet had time to test and validate to the extent that adults have (Snyder, 2011). Thus, they have more experience at their disposal, but this experience might also impede new learning. Snyder claims that teachers of adults need to be aware of this view in order to be able to adapt to adults' needs (Snyder, 2011).

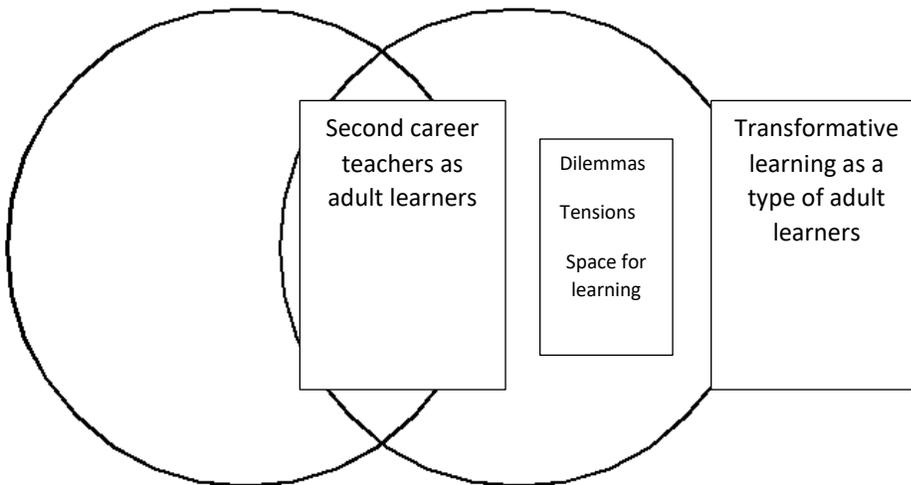
Research also suggests different modes of transformation. Mezirow claims that transformations are shifts in 'not what we know, but how we know what we know' (Mezirow, 2000a). He notes phases in transformation: *A disorienting dilemma, self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame, a critical assessment of assumptions, recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared, exploration of options from new roles, relationships, and actions, planning a course of action, acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans, provisional trying of new roles, building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, and finally a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective* (Mezirow, 2000a, p. 22). Thus, when adults encounter situations which cause them to question their existing frames of reference, they alter them, acquire new perspectives through which experiences are filtered, evaluation is conducted, and action occurs (Curran & Murray, 2009).

Hoggan (2016) proposes a typology of transformative learning outcomes such as changes in worldview, self, epistemology, ontology, behaviour or capacity. Illeris (2014) also relates to the nature of transformation and suggests that the process of transformation is not simply awareness but displays examination of triggers of transformative learning; questioning familiar roles and making meaning of the dissonances and dilemma they experience. Cranton (2002) identifies seven facets to help set up a learning environment to promote transformation: Articulating assumptions; critical self-reflection; being open to alternative viewpoints; engaging in discourse; revising assumptions; acting on revisions (p. 7). It is also noted that there are no particular methods that guarantee transformative learning and any provocative statement, argument or story, can stimulate self-reflection. Neither the teacher nor the student can pinpoint what initiated the process as it is gradual and happens within the student.

Novak and Knowles (1992) argued that second career teachers already have strong content knowledge in their areas of expertise and are therefore frustrated with the courses' requirements. They also felt that their previous careers and the recognition of competent professional was not sufficiently acknowledged by others (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003). It is therefore necessary to focus more on making links and meaning to prior experiences and acknowledging the value of previous experiences in order to facilitate the construction of their new professional identity.

### **The Analytical Framework**

The framework that emerged from the conceptual dimensions described in the theoretical perspectives guided the research design and provided the rationale for analysis. It is presented in the model in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Analytical Framework**

The model finds footing within Mezirow's theories of transformative learning involving learning activities, which begin with a disorienting dilemma and conclude with a changed frame of reference. It also refers to emotional experiences involved in transformative learning where adult learners (in the current study, second career teacher), might experience emotions such as tensions, uncertainty or anxiety when their frames of references are challenged. Experiencing such emotions can be a catalyst for transformative learning (Dirkx et al., 2006; Formenti & Dirkx, 2014; Nogueiras & Iborra, 2017).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Questions**

The aim of the study was to answer the following questions:

- What perceptual shifts regarding teaching do second career EFL teachers experience, in an accelerated retraining programme?
- What experiences in the course of the programme prompted the shifts?

### **Participants**

The research was conducted during 2017-2018 among teachers in a teacher education college in Israel who participated in a one year accelerated programme for gaining a teaching certificate in English (PGCE). The research group consisted of 15 teachers out of 27 registered in the course, who volunteered to be interviewed (33.3% male (N=5), and 66.6% female (N=10). They were all academic career changers who possessed a degree in different areas such as: law, art, business, marketing, psychology, accountancy, communication, behavioural studies. They were all proficient English speakers. Their ages ranged from 30 -55.

### **The Context of the Study**

The Post Graduate Certificate in Education for SCTs is a one-year programme run by the college but affiliated to and partly budgeted by the Israeli MoE. The syllabus abides by a core framework and standards provided by the MoE. It consists of theoretical and practical courses in literature, linguistics, pedagogical content, research. A significant component of the programme included a practicum where teachers observed their mentor teachers twice a week, taught different grade levels, and were observed by pedagogical advisors from the college. During the year, teachers were involved in a small-scale action research activity where they explored practices, beliefs and assumptions about teaching. The researchers were instructors in the programme during one academic year (2017-2018).

### **Method of Investigation**

In depth interviews were conducted with 15 teachers. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. Some interviews were conducted in person and some online or by phone. Questions in the interview required teachers to compare the two worlds: 'then'- teachers' former careers and 'then and now'- the transition into the new career. These questions exposed teachers' personal experiences and aimed at stimulating self-reflection, articulation of dilemmas, tensions, and shifts in perceptions regarding their new career. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim producing 90 pages of transcripts.

### **Analysis**

The research approach was inductive using qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2013). It is grounded in the data collected from in-depth interviews conducted with 15 teachers. Transcriptions of all interviews were read independently by each researcher in order to obtain a holistic view of the interviews. Special attention was given to language and choice of words to describe different aspects in their 'story'; for example, use of metaphors or images to manifest feelings and critical incidents. The 'shift of perception' were identified as instances of dissonance or disorientating dilemmas aligning with the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000b). Common emergent themes of annotated comments were identified, highlighted in different colours, condensed and organized into categories (Merriam, 2009). Excerpts which represented the categories were highlighted in identical colours. For a holistic view, all categories and excerpts were organized in a table of three columns: column one contained the categories, the second column contained the excerpts and the third column contained the researcher's comments. Recursive reading, discussions and constant comparison and validation between researchers aimed at further saturation of categories and at increasing inter-rater reliability (See figure 2: Tree of Categories). The degree of agreement between researchers was substantial and consistency of the categories developed was 90%.

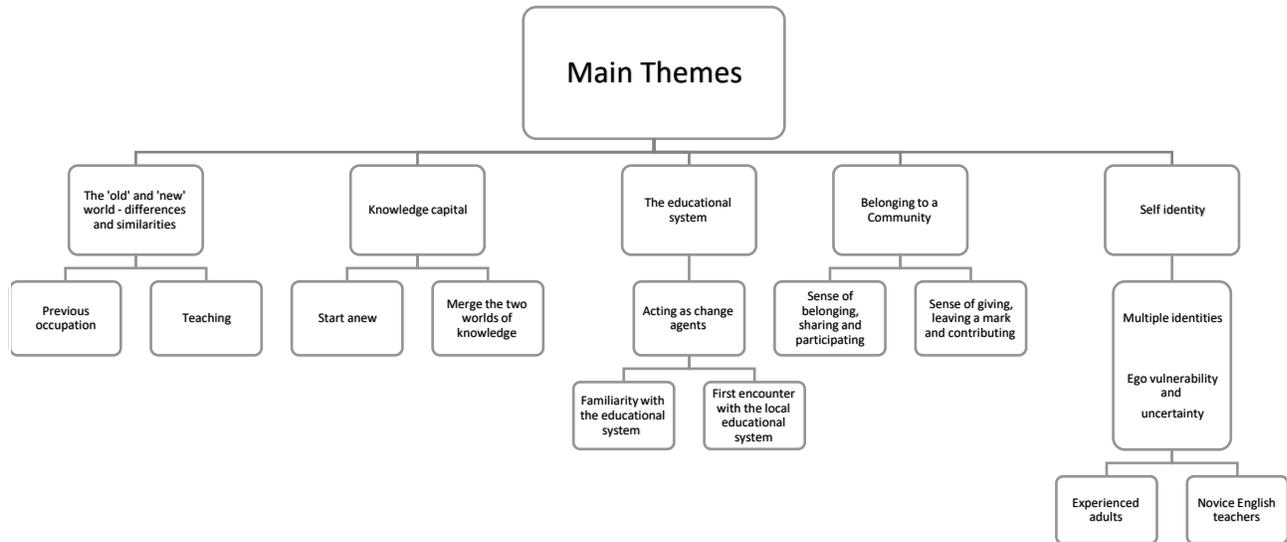


Figure 2. Tree of Categories

### Ethical Consideration

Teachers were notified about the purpose of research and its voluntary basis. Interviews were conducted at the end of the academic year after the teachers had graduated, in order to avoid possible power dynamics. Anonymity was secured, and identification details were omitted. Formal ethical permission from the Research Authority and Evaluation Committee was granted.

### Findings

The analysis of the transcripts elicited five core themes: 1. The old and the new world 2. Knowledge capital 3. School as community 4. The educational system 5. Self-identity. The themes illustrate shifts of frame of reference, based on Mezirow's theory of learning transformation (Mezirow, 2000b). We identified the shifts as instances where teachers describe dissonance, disorienting dilemmas and insights regarding the teaching profession related to the five core themes.

#### 1. The Essence of the 'Old' and 'New' World

Within this theme teachers referred to their old world, their previous occupation and their 'new world', their teaching profession. When these two worlds were compared, teachers (depending on their previous occupation) realized the shift in the essence of work relating to social interaction, job definition and self-expectations. One teacher commented on the monotony of her previous work which affected her sense of belonging: *'in my previous career I was doing more of the same, it was not special enough, I didn't shine, and I felt irrelevant'*. Another teacher, a lawyer in her previous career, realized that you are always part of a group in teaching *'you do not have the privilege of being on your own, you are always with people. If you do things*

wrong, you are stuck the whole year, and this is what frightens me. In law, customers come and go...’.

A previous military man who performed different leadership roles found some similarities between the two worlds regarding help and support: *‘When you are working with the military you are helping people become more effective in what they do...and then you come to these kids who need to know the grammar of a foreign language, who need to be exposed to literature in a language not their own...’*

Another teacher who was a ‘dog therapist’ suddenly felt ‘naked’ without her dogs. She explained that the dogs gave her strength while now she has to build up her own confidence, solo, without her ‘little helpers’. She also felt that in her new profession as a teacher her professional identity is defined, while in her previous profession as a dog therapist it was difficult for her to define her job *‘...it is a kind of a spiritual therapeutic job that not many people are familiar with...now I am going to be “an English teacher”, which is a clearly defined job’*.

A teacher who was previously in high-tech mentioned the work tension and the ‘rat race’ she had to cope with in her previous job unlike teaching which she found less competitive and more relaxed: *‘...it is a very competitive field and I am not that person. You need to be a politician in order to be promoted. Young people come in, they do not have kids and have all the motivation...I do not have enough. Being a teacher is different, it is a slower rate....’*

## 2. Knowledge Capital: Use It or Lose It

All teachers came into the profession with knowledge capital acquired in their previous occupations. In their new world of teaching they found themselves in a complex position where they either had to ‘pack up and seal’ what they had learned and start anew, or somehow merge the two worlds of knowledge. This realization prompted tension when teachers felt that they were not appreciated for what they had already acquired in the past; but there were also moments of satisfaction when they realized that they could actually use their previous knowledge in their new profession and draw on previous experiences. There were instances of insights when teachers’ previous knowledge helped them analyze situations in their practicum through another frame of reference. For example, one of the teachers whose expertise is in drama and movement realized that *‘children sit too much in class, they need to move more, I am going to incorporate my skills and knowledge into my teaching...’*

Another teacher made note of ‘the change in the way of thinking, being more reflective’, something she did not experience in her previous occupation and realized it was quite prominent in teaching and learning. A businessman who was quite confident in his abilities due to his previous rich experience with people, realized while observing his mentor teacher, that *‘there’s more stuff to learn...but it is doable... it is not intimidating...’*

A teacher who specialized in art realized how she could motivate young students through art: *‘I realized that it is very important to engage students, especially young ones and make them excited. They enter the gallery and they see this abstract painting and it says nothing to them. ‘You have to make a story about it, you have to get them excited about it’.*

Another teacher who practiced law emphasised the emotional aspect of teaching and said that in her previous job she did not need to deal with emotional issues: *‘it was totally professional, dry, legal, lots of money and lots of masculine energies...’*

A few teachers mentioned how their views on teaching and learning had received a different outlook: *'I thought that if you are really good at something, pupils will understand you, but it doesn't work like that...'*

### 3. The Educational System: Live or Leave

Most teachers were familiar with the educational system through experiences they had with their own children. For some teachers who studied abroad, this was their first encounter with the local Israeli educational system. For both groups being 'practicing teachers' within the system allowed different frames of reference to emerge.

One of the teachers who immigrated from England noted the differences between the educational system where she grew up and the Israeli system where her children are studying. She expressed concerns about her own children joining the system: *'I am going to teach in a system I don't want my kids to be in...big changes need to be made...I keep thinking if we had stayed in England where would my kids have gone to school and where they are now...wow! Have I made a mistake?'*

Another teacher was overwhelmed by the amount of lesson preparation in comparison to remunerations, and also that some mentor teachers in the practicum sometimes 'wing it'. He wondered whether they had the privilege of such an attitude after five or six years of teaching: *'So much preparation and yet some teachers come in the morning and wing it, I am not there yet... I did not realize that...and the compensation...there is no correlation...'*

A teacher who came from a 'teachers' family' was suddenly aware of the dissonance between her vision of being a teacher and challenges she was experiencing: *'I had no appreciation of what goes on in education even though I come from a teachers' family. I am aware of the difficulties, responsibility...the fact that I am a native English speaker doesn't necessarily mean it is all going to be easy. Everything is much more complex and demanding than I'd ever imagined'*.

Teachers also expressed strong views of how they saw themselves acting as *change agents* within the system: *'Yes I can make a change; I will be a good role model who has come with a different passion outlook. The whole system needs to be changed, it is not natural to learn like this'*. *'Seeing the changes, I can actually make on others and the impact - it is not for nothing'*. Teachers realized a gap between 'what they want' and 'what they think they can do' and were aware of the constraints of the educational system.

### 4. Community: Sharing and Belonging

Teachers had worked in highly competitive professions such as law, marketing, and high-tech companies and saw teaching as a profession which would enable them to belong to a community, an aspect they had lacked in their prior professions. The sense of community and the sharing of feelings and thoughts, helped in disclosing doubts about the choice of career: *'I discovered that almost everyone had a bad experience with the educational system...'*, *'I am not persuaded to go into the system. It has been a struggle'*.

Others expressed more feelings of giving: *'Teaching is about giving to other people. And I guess that giving to other people is something that I like to do. I don't "just" want to be the teacher who comes in and that's it, the school is a community at the end of the day. It is a*

*combination of wanting to contribute, of loving children and wanting to dedicate to their, you know, education. I know I sound a bit heroic, it's true I wanted to do something that would leave like a mark on people that somebody would say, hopefully along the way that they had a great English teacher and I had inspired them'.*

As we can see teachers conceptualize 'community' in different ways. While some use the notion of belonging, sharing and participating, others refer to giving, leaving a mark and contributing as one of the teachers said: *'It's extremely important to work in a team- especially for teachers... to get backup... consultation ...investment...coordination... with staff... that means a lot.'* Teachers in this study expressed the desire to belong to a community, create new relationships and be supported by professionals and colleagues, while some still not felt part of the teaching community.

## 5. Self-Identity

The notion of self-identity was prominent in teachers' talk. The sense of multiple identities as experienced adults and novice teachers generated insights regarding self-identity. Some of the teachers exhibited 'ego vulnerability at meeting points between who they 'were', what they thought they knew and who they are 'becoming', realizing what they do not know: *'We discovered that we do not know anything about teaching, and we were assigned to mentors younger than we were. This was hard to digest but I put my ego aside'*. This dissonance between identities has been a destabilizing experience for several teachers: *'Being treated as a 22-year-old when nobody really knows what I have done in the past, is difficult to grasp'*.

The uncertainty about the choice of profession and sustainability for the new job also emerged at the meeting points between the different identities. Teachers realized that they still could not stand out and say proudly that they had chosen to become teachers: *'Of course, I have my insecurities I guess more than in the beginning because I've been in the classrooms ... I thought about it... I need to defend myself...I am a teacher who was a lawyer... I tell about my new profession only to people who I am sure will be supportive. Being a teacher in Israel is not very prestigious'*.

Teachers felt the need to defend their choice by comparing the 'before' and 'now' identities: *'I was good, but I was still mediocre. I wanted to be the best accountant, but I couldn't shine. I wanted to give more of myself. I had no place to express myself... I feel I am first an educator and only than an English teacher'*. These are examples of instances when teachers were encountered with either provocative statements or questions that shook their self-confidence and prompted deeper critical reflection on the essence of becoming a teacher.

Some used metaphors to describe their feelings of uncertainty and disorientation at the threshold of neither here nor there, not having yet begun the transition to their new status or identity: *'I feel like standing in front of a long road and not knowing where to go'; 'I am standing on the edge of a big lake not ready to jump, just watching carefully'*.

## Summary: Tying It All Together

In the analysis of teachers' experiences, we witness how they look at different aspects of their previous career through the lenses of the current reality they experience. They are not detached 'observers' where lenses might be a bit opaque, but actual actors in the reality of the

new career where they have to act and respond to real situations. These real instances prompt changes in frames of references and are recounted by a lawyer, a dog therapist, a hi-tech person, the student who asks the 'if' and 'how' questions as she suddenly feels 'a novice' albeit the knowledge she came equipped with. The gap between their previous positions as autonomous decision makers, or at times freelancers, and the current position where they are mentored and told what to do and how, is a transformative moment, for the better or worse. It intensifies issues that might have been in the back of their minds but were brought to the forefront quite aggressively when they had to confront the reality of a low salary and being treated as a 22-year-old novice teacher. Thus, it is apparent that teachers' powerful discourse encompasses many uncertainties and dilemmas that were evidently an integral part of their everyday experience during the process of learning and career change.

Similarly, the process they were going through influenced their perspectives of 'self' as displayed in their encounter with practice teaching where they were perceived by others as novices. In a sense, it unsettles assumptions about their own capabilities and competencies based on their previous careers and what they bring with them into the 'new community'. For some teachers this experience of ego clashes is powerful and confusing. They were recruited on the calling of 'the system craves for you'. They entered the programme motivated and with a somewhat boosted ego that they are going 'to save the system'. Reality was a bit different for some of them and might have challenged their self-confidence and self-image. However, Wenger (1998) regards the process as 'work in progress' – 'identities need to be negotiated as they are temporal and encompass multiple trajectories which become part of each other whether they clash or reinforce each other' (Wenger, 1998, p. 159).

## Discussion

The study investigated second career teachers' perceptual shifts regarding teaching and the experiences that prompted these shifts. The analysis of teachers' interviews exposed five main themes where teachers displayed shifts of perceptions: The old and new worlds, knowledge capital, educational system, community and self-identity. All the themes relate directly to the two key concepts discussed in 'theoretical perspectives': a. second career teachers (For example, Tigchelaar et al., 2010), and b. transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). The synergy between the two concepts created tension, dilemmas and dissonances (Dirkx et al., 2006; Nogueiras & Iborra, 2017) which, generated spaces for learning for the teachers and thus fertile grounds for shifting in frame of reference as presented in Fig. 1.

The findings reveal shifts in frame of references regarding each of the five themes. In other words, by comparing old and new worlds, addressing the issue of knowledge capital, identifying their new community, and discovering their new self in the educational system, instances of reflection, tension and dilemmas emerged. Such tension and dilemmas generated new learning opportunities as teachers started viewing experiences through different lenses. This process aligns with Kegan's claim that transformations are shifts in not 'what we know, but how we know what we know' (1994, p.17).

These instances illustrate what is defined as a liminal stage (Gennep, 1960) or 'the edge of knowing' (Berger, 2004, p. 338) where the knowing and not knowing create new forms of thinking. Berger, likewise Mezirow, endorses critical reflection as significant for transformed learning and claims that 'reflection that just lets a person see what already is without new lenses

through which to view new assumptions is unlikely to lead to new actions' (Berger, 2004, p.337). A person needs to be 'more critically reflective of their assumptions and aware of their context'. When people begin to 'unpack what is' (p. 337) and question and use new lenses through which they filter their impressions, it is transformational.

The teachers are at a stage where they need to reconcile between the different aspects of competences, ego and uncertainties. Wenger (1998) claims that the work of reconciliation is a significant challenge faced by learners who move from one community to the other. Some teachers found it more difficult to develop a personal and social identity in the new community of teaching. This challenge is understandable as it requires much more than 'learning the rules of what to do when' (Wenger, 1998, p.160). They have to deal with conflicting forms of individuality and competence as defined in different communities and this requires shifting into a new professional mindset and integrating a new profession into already existing frameworks of themselves as professionals. This explains the uncertainty exposed in some of the teachers' comments regarding their choice of profession, their apparent fragile self-image as 'teachers' and their lack of confidence to face the classroom and the system at large.

## Conclusions and Practical Implications

Our research was conducted at the end of the training programme just before induction into teaching and we cannot be sure how the shifts in frames of references that we have observed will affect teachers' motivation and integration in schools. As a follow up study, we are shadowing the teachers in their first year of independent teaching to identify further changes and shifts. However, in light of our data, we suggest that the liminal stage of uncertainty is fertile ground for learning, not only for the second career teachers, but also for teacher trainers, educators and curriculum designers. We endorse Berger's quote that 'Charting the path of transformation and paying attention to its most fertile grounds allows us to be better company for students who are working through their own transformative experiences' (Berger, 2004, p.350). In order to nurture the ground for newcomers to the profession so that they would enhance their learning and maintain resilience to face new and challenging trajectories, teacher educators have to learn about their SC teachers' experiences in their initial stages into teaching (Laming & Horne, 2013). We wish to support previous studies on second career teachers which have already identified the need to gain understanding of what enables or limits the reconstruction of professional identities (Trent, 2018) and to tailor programmes to suit these teachers who are different from the traditional young student teachers (Tigchelaar, et al., 2010).

Teacher education programmes have to acknowledge and ascertain teachers' previous knowledge and regard it as an asset. This would alleviate the transition into the school community and create a sense of belonging, a critical aspect mentioned by most of the teachers. This aligns with the notion of 'community membership' which states that 'when we are with a community of practice of which we are a full member, we are in familiar territory. We can handle ourselves competently...and we are recognized as competent' (Wenger, 1998, p. 152). Creating a safe territory during teacher preparation stage would allow for self-reflection, articulation of assumptions, openness to different viewpoints and thus a change in how we view the world.

We agree with Cranton's contention that there are no particular methods to teach transformative learning and this should not be an end in itself (2002). Learning transformation

may take place as a reaction to a challenging question, a critical incident or exposure to new knowledge. These may cause some sort of disequilibrium in frames of reference, or as we defined it 'meeting points of tension'. As teacher educators it is our role to create these instances and encourage critical reflection especially among adult learners, who enter teaching with life experience and already established world views. It is also our role to understand better how they learn and how to meet their needs (Snyder, 2011). The current study allows us to gain insights into second career teachers' experiences and to establish a basis for reflection on how to develop and upgrade second career teachers' programmes. We hope to further enrich our knowledge in our second phase where we would follow the teachers in their first year of independent teaching and integration in schools.

### Limitations of the Study

The aim of the study is not to generalise but to identify perceptual shifts of a small-scale group (Knight, 2002) in a particular college and arrive at propositions that can be investigated in other similar contexts that might produce different insights. In addition, our study was conducted within a one year time frame, thus the scope of 'conceptual shifts in frame of reference' might be limited. We, therefore, continue to follow the teachers in their initial phases as independent teachers where they would be exposed to more experiences and enrich their 'teaching stories' from which we would draw further insights of shifts in perceptions.

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