

One of the criticisms of "Teach First Israel" is that you are beginning to work as teachers after only 5 weeks of training, whereas regular trainee-teachers train for 3-4 years. Do you feel prepared to give a lesson?

"Absolutely, and this doesn't mean that I won't get nervous and excited or that all will be perfect. The selections for "Chotam" were very difficult, and they tested, among other things, the ability to give a lesson. The fears and the criticism are quite understandable, but, on the other hand, the main thing is to take the plunge as quickly as possible. After all, the training will be continuing for the whole year, and there is also a limit to the benefit of theoretically learning how to manage a class, and similar topics. The true teaching occurs face to face with the pupils.

I personally engaged in instruction in the past, but other participants in the program are anxious about starting work as teachers. Some of them asked how it was possible to be ready after such a short spell of training, especially as some of them had never been close to the education system. There are those in the program who are afraid, some who even don't know of what they should be afraid: - of the ability to hold the class or of transmitting the material. But, in the same breath, there is a lot of motivation, the sense "of being eager to enter the fray." The training course gave us the feeling of being a team coming into the education system in order to bring change. This has minimized the fear a bit."

It's a big responsibility to begin to work as a teacher.

"For a few days I deliberated whether to accept the suggestion of the school administration to teach the class of weak students. In this role one must be the mother and father of the students, there is a great deal of closeness, and I am still not altogether familiar with the education system. I even thought that perhaps I should work for a year as a regular teacher, and only after that to take this responsibility on myself. It wasn't an easy decision, but in the end I accepted the offer. After all, we joined the system in order to try and reduce the social gaps, and the connection between the socio-economic status and the students' achievements."

What is your biggest anxiety?

"There is a fear of problems of discipline and violence on the part of the students, especially in the classes which I shall be teaching. Hence the great importance of the personal talks which I held in the past few days. I tried to show the students, even by means of my body language, that there will be discipline in my class. The limits have to be very clear. When I asked the students which teacher they had most liked in the junior high school, 90% mentioned a tough teacher who didn't give in to them on anything, and that there was quiet in the class. The students are looking for such things. The next stage will be a meeting with the parents in order to get them involved in the changes."

How will the rest of the teachers in the school receive the young "Teach First Israel" participants who have come "to save the education system?" Won't this approach turn the veteran teachers against them?

"The truth is that even more than I feared the students, I was anxious about my integration into the system, and the conversations in the teachers' room. We have mentors in the school who guide and assist us, among other things, on this point as well. After I met with my mentor, I said that at least one person will smile at me in the morning in the teachers' room, but these fears have vanished. The teaching staff is very supportive.

In the program they spoke to us a lot about humility, which is expressed, among other things, by the understanding that we have not come to change the order of things in the school or to save the education system, but to do other things on our small piece of G-d's earth, in the classes we shall be teaching in. Education is also personal example. If we succeed, our methods and the way we conduct ourselves will be adopted by other teachers. We are entering the educational jungle with the aspiration to bring about an in-depth change in the long-term. There are no quick solutions here."

How long do you think you will remain in the education system?

"I am planning on being in the field for many years. It's my vision, but it's too early to commit myself. I want to find the place in which I can exert a good influence on as many people as possible."¹

¹Translated from Ha'aretz' Hebrew edition: <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1187433.html>