



מכון ון ליר בירושלים

THE VAN LEER JERUSALEM INSTITUTE

معهد فان لير في القدس

Excellence • Innovation • Involvement



Improving Teachers' Collective Efficacy in Disadvantaged Communities

A community-based action research program to improve student learning outcomes by changing methods of professional development and improving collaboration among teachers.

Research in Israel has continuously indicated that disadvantaged communities, typically located in the peripheries, lack access to a strong educational infrastructure. The local educational authorities in Israel's social and geographic periphery struggle to improve their education system, and the gap between them and the more affluent local authorities keeps on growing.

In 2013, the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute initiated two policy research papers which focused on the management and development of the teaching workforce in Israel. The two main findings were: a. 15% of the teaching workforce are being employed as "contract teachers" (meaning that

they have been outsourced to private entities), an ongoing trend that may undermine any attempt to improve teaching and learning processes; b. local authorities are currently a wasted resource that must be included in any endeavor to improve teaching and learning (and thus student achievements), in particular if the aim is to sever the connection between socio-economic status and educational achievement. Following these research papers, VLJI initiated a pilot program in a small community in the south of Israel to examine the possibility of redesigning the professional development of the teaching workforce, while involving all stakeholders - and in particular the local authority - in the process and aligning it with evidence-based needs and abilities.

We developed an action-research project that first maps the needs, resources, strengths and weaknesses of the teaching workforce in the local authority, as well as the

A VLJI Project

available resources to address needs and to support the teachers. Based on real evidence, a long term plan was formulated in collaboration with all the stakeholders which included time allocations for school principals to work with their teachers, and ways to enhance teamwork among teachers.

The project's predominant goal is to improve student achievement by promoting teachers' collective efficacy. Any professional development of teachers that does not address real needs and specific local circumstances can have no effect on the quality of teaching and learning.

Need

Our research found that there is a real and urgent need to support the existing teacher workforce in disadvantaged communities and to offer a long term and sustainable professional development program that has a direct impact on teaching and learning. In many communities, we learned that even where there is some level of professional development, it lags way behind the educational best practices and fails to address the real and varied needs of the particular community.



This project is supported by Yad Hanadiv



Solution

The action research project is three-fold. It generates:

- an educational leadership team that includes the local authority together with other stakeholders as equal partners in shaping and implementing educational programs in the local authority.
- a work plan for the professional development of the entire teaching workforce in the local authority that is aligned with real needs and is supported with (mostly) existing resources.
- a new culture of cooperation and a deep sense of shared responsibility and commitment among all stakeholders towards all the children and youth in the community.

The program targets disadvantaged communities where socio-economic challenges run deep and educational outcomes are low in comparison to the rest of the country.

Background

The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute bridges the gap between academic research and social involvement, addressing major challenges in the areas of Israeli Civil Society and Democracy; Jewish Culture and Identity; Advanced Studies in the Humanities and the Social Sciences; Regional Peace and Dialogue; Education; Economic Development; and Social and Gender Equality.

VLJI's Chazan Center for Social Justice and Democracy focuses on issues of privatization and regulation of public services. It sponsors and supports applied research that is widely disseminated and often used to advocate change and improvement in Israeli society.

Be our partner in this important enterprise.

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