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## **Art Student Perceptions of the Role of Community Service in Israeli Teacher Education**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to understand how student art teachers perceive the contribution to their training of community service in various frameworks, such as a prison and a drug rehabilitation center. The research was conducted in 2006-2007 in the School of Art at Beit Berl College, Israel, in two stages. In the first stage, six open-ended interviews were held with students who had taken part in community service, transcriptions of which were subjected to content analysis, yielding four main themes, each comprised of several items. These items were later formulated into a questionnaire, which was administered in the second stage to 120 students of the college. The questionnaire results demonstrate that students felt that community service had contributed meaningfully to their training as art teachers and also helped them to define and develop their emotional world, but the respondents were divided regarding the contributions of community service to their creative work as artists.

## **Introduction**

Between the years 2003 and 2006, the School of Art at Beit Berl College conducted a unique experiment in which student art teachers taught art in diverse community frameworks, such as a prison, a drug rehabilitation center, TEHILA (basic education for adults), a children's hospital, a battered women's shelter, and day care centers for children of foreign workers run by MESILA (Center for Assistance and Information for Foreign Workers), in addition to their regular teaching practice in mainstream schools. They participated willingly and gave freely of their time, and this activity soon became an important part of their regular schedule. The main purpose of the present study was to examine these students' perceptions of their experience of community service and its implications, in order to understand the long-term impact that this meeting with diverse populations had on them, as art educators and people involved in the community. Before describing the study, we will first review the research literature on the development of community involvement and civic responsibility among students. Following this review, we will focus on art teacher training and describe the community projects run by the School of Art throughout the years, as well as the aims that were set for these projects, and then present the activity as it took place.

### **Civic Responsibility as a Component of Teacher Education**

The research literature mentions two benefits resulting from the integration of community service in higher education curricula (Parker-Gwin & Mabry, 1998): one in the realm of personal development, and the other in academic studies. With regard to personal development, curriculum planners claim that community service is very important for the student's development as an adult involved in society. They also see it as a response to the social malaise expressed by alienation between population groups, and as a means of bringing the various disciplines closer to the 'real life' of the student (*ibid.*). Studying in programs that involve social responsibility develops a critical view and creative ability to solve problems (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993; Mettetal & Bryant, 1996). Such programs help to develop social sensitivity and guide the student towards involvement, leading to social activism and volunteering in the community. In addition, the student develops positive interest in and awareness of political events in the community (Sax, 2004), and this is conducive to the growth of civic responsibility. Scholars claim that this influence is long-term and that the students carry these new-found abilities for the rest of their lives (Astin & Sax, 1998). The students develop positive thinking and personal skills such as identification and assessment of the needs of the population and the ability to formulate aims (Kennedy & Mead, 1996). The second benefit gained by integrating community service in the curriculum is reinforcement of academic studies (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Raskoff, 1994).

These two benefits of community service are reflected in Israel's educational policy on two levels: (1) developing the students' involvement in the community, and (2) making the curriculum more relevant to the future teacher. With regard to students' involvement in the community, the report of the Dovrat Commission (2005) on reform of the educational system presented a vision of Israel's public education system. Among other things, the report stated the following:

We see active citizenship and commitment to the community as supreme educational aims that will become part of the curriculum and the compulsory activity in all the public schools.

Commitment to the community and social involvement are based on the values of giving to society and to the community, perseverance and responsibility, tolerance, respect for human rights, enterprise, and grappling with difficulties related to the world outside the school.

Commitment to the community is a step in the scale of values and behavior that should be inculcated in every student in the educational system. Involvement and active participation inside and outside the school and kindergarten serve the values of giving and mutual help, recognition of the other and understanding of the meaning of the social value created within the community. It is known that taking part in these activities enhances the personal responsibility of the students and moderates extreme behaviors among youth (Dovrat Commission Report, p. 63).

The writers of the report were not the first to see social involvement as a primary goal of the educational system. Although the present study deals with students in higher education and not with youth, the subject of community service arose earlier, in the Kremnitzer report of 1996, which noted the importance of addressing the question of citizen-state relations (p.10). The writers of the Kremnitzer report proposed a systemic approach to civic education and stressed the importance of incorporating community service into the curriculum (Kremnitzer, 1996). Thus, both of these commissions emphasized that social involvement as part of the curriculum would help to develop a graduate involved and interested in the community and in politics, and as we saw above, this is borne out by research findings on community service of students.

Community service activities of students in many institutes of higher education was recently mapped in a research study (Golan-Agnon, Rosenfeld et al., 2005). The authors found that there was generally no overall policy concerning institutes' involvement in these activities, and most of the students' community service proceeded unaccompanied by academic

supervision or research. The students ran numerous organizations, movements and units working for social change and the narrowing of social gaps, but very little knowledge was recorded or passed on, and barely any applied research emerged from the activity. The importance ascribed to the development of social involvement among students in higher education was reflected in a meeting held in April 1997 between four former presidents of the United States - Ford, Carter, Bush and Clinton. The meeting dealt mainly with the need to emphasize the importance of volunteering in the community. The four agreed on the construction of a curriculum to be applied in colleges in order to develop social involvement among the students (Parker-Gwin & Mabry, 1998).

The idea that incorporating community service actually enriches the curriculum itself has been borne out by reports from university faculties in the USA that show the studies were revitalized, the students showed great interest, engaged seriously in problem solving, and enjoyed their studies (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Similarly, Ziv (2001) wrote about the role of the Faculty of Law in educating the lawyer: "The Faculty of Law, as a social institution, has special responsibility for promoting the values of social justice and equality" (p. 418). Examining the roles of the faculty, Ziv described a curriculum that permitted the students to expand the range of their activities as lawyers, to develop sensitivity toward the underprivileged and take their situation into account when representing those more privileged. But beyond personal and professional qualities, Ziv determined that training programs that integrate practical experience with underprivileged populations enhance the learning experience: "It may be hoped that the learning experience bound up with this manner of learning will lead to internalization of the complexity of the relationship between law and social change" (p. 80).

Referring to teacher training, Harel (1992) wrote that "Service to the community as a learning requirement is, in fact, 'learning through service', which enriches the student and the recipient of the service" (p. 110). She, too, referred to the enrichment achieved by the integrated program. In addition, other scholars (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996) found that the inclusion of community service in curricula made the curricula more enjoyable and channeled positive new energies into the classes. Teacher training curriculum in Israel commonly features declarations about the need for graduates who are involved in the community, but the curricula themselves contain very little material on the subject of developing social involvement and civic responsibility among future teachers. As mentioned by Golan-Agnon et al. (2005), most of the institutes of higher education have no overall policy of commitment to community service. Even when such activities take place, there is usually no connection between the curriculum and the community service.

### **Community Service in the Training of Art Teachers**

The School of Art at Beit Berl College had in the past operated community projects for many years, based on the understanding that activities of this nature contribute to the student's training, but these were short-term projects which had no ongoing effect on the art teacher's training. The experiment that took place in 2003-2006 in various social frameworks outside the school differed from the earlier projects in that it was designed to generate a process of creative interaction with the training of future art teachers. The conceptual basis in the planning of the new program was the hope of finding a suitable formula for community service in diverse settings that would provide the future art teacher with a wide variety of educational experiences.

#### **Community Service Run by the School of Art in 2003-2006**

The first project was experimental work in Hadarim prison conducted by ten students who were selected for their excellence in art studies and social involvement in the School of Art. This project continued for one year. Once a week the students met with a group of prisoners in the dining hall, and together they discussed major issues in art that might be relevant to the prisoners. In the course of these instructional workshops each of the participants attempted to describe himself/herself, and then they all worked on self portraits. Some of these were painted jointly by students and prisoners, showing the differences and similarities between them. An example of such a work may be seen in Figure 1.



*Figure 1. Contact, support, friendship.*

This painting was displayed in an exhibition held in the Beit Berl Central Gallery in 2004. The opening of the exhibition was attended by officers and guards from the prison that was the site of the students' work with the prisoners. The exhibition was later transferred to the prison and displayed in the wing of the prisoners who had shared in its creation.

The organizers also held weekly meetings with the students and examined the experience together, asking themselves some complex questions: What is our contribution to these people? What do we do there? Do we engage in art? Who can and should be taught art? How do you teach people like these? Should we devote our time to people who have committed crimes? Wouldn't it be better to devote time to the victims? Following are brief descriptions of the other sites of community service.

*Day Care Centers for children of foreign workers.* The students worked in 21 day care centers in the area of Tel Aviv's old central bus station. This work was conducted in the framework of MESILA (Center for Assistance and Information for Foreign Workers), under the auspices of Tel Aviv Municipality. The students engaged the children in activity around a certain subject, for example, concepts such as big and small, or light and dark. The students prepared a detailed work plan for each session, and they were responsible for finding art materials for use in the session. Some of the materials were collected especially for the children in the sculpture workshop.

*A rehabilitation center run by the Anti-Drug Authority.* Here the students and the rehabilitants worked on improving the appearance of the Center. They designed the courtyard, choosing the theme Garden of Eden. The work included painting a wall, making a garden seat designed by the rehabilitants and constructed from old planks. They planted a garden and decorated the floor with broken tiles using a mosaic technique. Most of the activity revolved around the shared creation of the "Garden of Eden" from broken and abandoned parts. This was a kind of analogy of the rehabilitants themselves, who found renewed strength in this activity.

*Abu Kabir detention center.* Here the students worked in the youth wing, the women's wing and the men's wing, and the activities were planned to match each of these populations. In the women's wing the women and the students prepared decorative tiles to stick on the walls, creating a mosaic. In the youth wing, with the students' help, the youth painted large murals on the corridor walls. They worked long hours on this and created an impressive combination of brightly colored pictures on the grey walls. The detainees in the men's wing painted the walls of the yard in vivid colors.

*Pardes Daka, a depressed area in Jaffa.* The students prepared a work plan for the children to construct a puppet theater, together with some of the mothers who joined in the activity. The children wrote the text and designed the puppets and the scenery. At the end they staged the show before a local audience in the neighborhood. The students made a video film of the activity and left it in the neighborhood center as a memento.

*Battered women's shelter.* The students, together with the women and their children, made huge imaginary animals from discarded materials such as plastic bottles and old newspapers.

These big, colorful animals later decorated the shelter. It was important for the program organizers to use simple materials of the kind that are readily available in order to enable the mothers to share the creative experience with their children and also to see this activity as an analogy for the changes they could make in their lives, transforming their gloomy reality into something brighter and better.

*Kfar Hayarok residential school for new immigrants.* Here the art students ran a program for enrichment through art work. The children decorated their rooms. In the course of this activity every child drew an imaginary figure and all the drawings were then collated into a collective picture that decorated their study room. As these were children of new immigrants living in a residential school, one of the aims set for this activity was to encourage joint activity that would help the children to get to know each other better and achieve empowerment through shared artistic creation.

In *Bialik School* in Tel Aviv, a school populated by children from 22 different countries, the students implemented a program for visual literacy. The children were given cameras and each of them filmed his/her favorite corners at home and in the neighborhood. The exhibition was displayed in a storeroom that the children and students cleared and decorated for the occasion.

All of the above activities were documented in a logbook for future study and analysis. Following the implementation of this community service program, the curriculum planners at the School of Art decided to integrate community service as part of the formal curriculum of the teacher training program. They determined that every student would take part in two community projects during his/her training, concurrently with their teaching practice in schools. In addition to the community service that now became part of the formal curriculum, they also introduced community service as an extra-curricular activity, for which students were accepted according to criteria of excellence in art and art education. After two years of activity in this framework, the organizers decided to examine the students' perception of the community service and of its contribution to themselves as future art teachers and as individuals in society.

## **Purpose and Methodology**

### **Research Objectives**

The main research aim was to examine the student art teachers' experience of community service and to understand the implications of its results from their point of view, in order to comprehend the long-term emotional effect of the encounter with diverse populations during the course of their training. This knowledge was considered important for the purpose of reviewing and developing the student's training as an artist, an art educator, and a leader of

social processes in the community. The major research question was: What were the students' perceived outcomes from their participation in community service?

### Methodology

The research was conducted in two stages. In the first stage the researchers held six focused interviews with students who had participated in community service during the three years prior to the research. After analyzing the interviews we constructed a questionnaire based on the results of this analysis. In the second stage the questionnaire was distributed to 400 students, of whom 117 returned the completed questionnaires. These questionnaires were analyzed, and the answers were examined.

### Participants

In the first stage – the focused interview – the participants were six students, four women and two men, randomly selected from the group of students who had participated in the community service program during the previous three years. The interviews were tape recorded and the transcripts were subjected to content analysis.

In the second stage, the 117 students who had completed and returned all parts of the questionnaire were selected as participants. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by participation in the various community projects.

Table 1. *Distribution of Respondents by Participation in Projects (N = 117)*

Project	No.	%
Questionnaires returned by students who had completed their studies (various projects)	6	5.0
Anti-Drug Authority	9	7.5
Hadarim prison	3	2.5
Abu Kabir detention center	16	13.3
Pardes Daka (depressed area)	9	7.5
Battered women's shelter	6	5.0
Kfar Hayarok residential school, mostly for children of new immigrants	6	5.0
Program for enrichment through art	9	7.5
Bialik School attended by multinational population, mostly foreign workers	10	8.3
Visual literacy program	15	12.5
Day care center for children of foreign workers	31	25.8



Table 1 shows that the largest group of students (25.3%) chose to work in the day care centers for children of foreign workers (see description above), and the other participants were scattered among the various organizations.

### **Research Instruments**

As mentioned above, the first stage of the research consisted of focused interviews (Nahmias & Nahmias, 1992), and in the second stage we constructed a questionnaire and distributed it to all the students in the School of Art.

### **Interviews**

The purpose of our interviews was to understand the experiences described by the students and clarify their personal motives for participating in the project. We sought to discover how their participation in the project had affected them, and what processes – practical, professional, cognitive and affective – they had undergone while participating in the project. The interviews were taped and the transcripts were subjected to content analysis (Givton in Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2001; Viney, 1983). We asked the interviewees to describe in detail what experiences they remembered from the community service, why they had chosen to take part in the activity, and what they had learned from it.

For this part of the study we chose to use focused interviews (Nahmias, 1992), because of the characteristics of this type of interview. The interviewees were known to be involved in the experience that was the focus of the research. They were all students who had participated in the past three years in community service in the framework of their studies. The dialogue in the interview was based on analysis of data collected prior to the interview, during their first year of community service in Hadarim prison, and also on knowledge on the subject obtained from other sources. We asked each interviewee to answer the following questions in as much detail as possible: What experiences do you remember from this community service? Why did you choose to take part in this activity? What did you learn from it? The interview was planned in such a way as to meet the four basic criteria of the interview (Merton, Fiske, & Kendal, 1990):

1. *Range*. The focused interview could enable us to collect a broad range of data on important elements of the student's experiences and memories of the community service, and on his/her view of this activity as part of the art teacher's training.
2. *Specificity*. Through the focused interview we could obtain a precise description of the interviewee's motives – in this case the students' motivation to participate in the voluntary activity.
3. *Depth*. The focused interview could serve as an opportunity for the interviewees to develop their understanding of processes which they perhaps had not thought about in great depth, and thus for the first time to expose unarticulated knowledge.

4. *Personal context.* The focused interview could expose elements in the interviewees' personal experience that contributed to their way of looking at things, in this case, the manner in which the students saw the community service in the context of their training.

The interviews took place in the college. We were allocated a room where we could talk privately with the students without being disturbed. Sometimes a student chose to talk in the cafeteria in her usual corner where she sat between classes, and we willingly complied with this request. The conversation flowed freely, and the atmosphere was relaxed. Most of the text consisted of the interviewee's words, facilitated by the interviewer's questions. We used both open-ended and semi-structured questions with a structured stimulus and a free response (ibid.). During the interviews we used a number of means for validation. The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions, and we asked the interviewees to elaborate on their answers and add examples so that we could examine the consistency of the arguments and learn about the language used. The interviews were taped and the transcripts were sent to a sample of the interviewees for their comments (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

*Content analysis of the interviews.* The transcripts of the interviews were submitted to a qualitative content analysis (Givton in Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2001; Viney, 1983) in three steps.

1. Some of the transcripts were sampled in order to identify themes. First, we chose a suitable analysis unit for the interview, the guiding principle being that the content unit represented one issue.
2. The major themes were marked in different colors, each with an identifying letter. The sentences were classified by theme and the procedure came to an end when no new themes were detected.
3. We chose some representative examples based on statements that were repeated many times, and we formulated the major themes.

*Analysis of the results.* After classification, the results were summarized. Repetition was perceived as strengthening agreement, and lack of congruence was examined to see whether the students' words described an aspect not previously mentioned, or perhaps a new aspect. The content analysis was conducted concurrently by the two researchers, who examined the categories for reliability of the analysis. A level of agreement of 97% was found, and after discussion and re-examination of the items full agreement was reached. The content analysis yielded four major themes: the contribution of the community service to the subject's insights regarding art teaching; the feelings that accompanied the social experience; personal insights that the students gained in the course of the service, and specific insights regarding art. These four themes were then used to construct a questionnaire to be administered to a broader population of students.

**Questionnaire** (see Appendix 1)

The questionnaires were distributed to all the students of the college during pedagogy classes. The lecturers informed the students of the study and asked them to cooperate and fill out the questionnaire. Naturally, the students were given the choice of whether to participate or not, and most of them chose to respond (although afterwards many of the returned questionnaires were rejected because they were not completed, so the final number of questionnaires examined was 117). We chose the pedagogy classes for this purpose because these lessons were mandatory, so it was easy to reach the students and have them fill out the questionnaire there and then. In addition, the art education teachers knew about the research and were interested in the results, so they were ready to cooperate in administering the questionnaires to the students. The questionnaire contained statements describing the participants' experience and personal feelings concerning the community service. The statements were extracted from the focused interviews in the first part of the study, and the division into themes was based on the content analysis of the interviews. The participants were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement on a 7-point scale from 1 (*not true*) to 7 (*very true*). In addition, they were asked to elaborate on other feelings or experiences that did not appear in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire comprised three parts. The first part consisted of two open-ended personal questions on participation in community service. In the first question the respondents were asked to describe the activity in which they had engaged in the context of the community service, and in the second question they were asked to write about their most meaningful experience in this service. The second part consisted of 20 statements, divided into 4 themes: (a) contribution of professional insights – represented by 4 statements; (b) the feelings that accompanied the experience – 8 statements, 2 of them in reverse order for processing; (c) personal insights they had gained (not necessarily related to the profession) – 6 statements, and (d) insights regarding art – 2 statements. In the third part of the questionnaire the respondents were asked to add comments and express their thoughts, feelings, criticism, and whatever else they had to say concerning their participation in the service. In this way we sought to expose information that had not emerged in the interviews or in the other parts of the questionnaire.

## Results

### Part 1

In the initial classification of the students' responses it emerged that three of the activities were not described by them as community service. This was interesting because it indicated that some of the lecturers defined the aims of the activity differently from the pre-defined aims of the program. The students described experiences that had brought them into contact with populations unknown to them. They reported that they had learned about the needs of these people and had a sense of satisfaction resulting from their personal contribution. They

also remarked that the meeting with less privileged people had helped them to find in themselves abilities of which they had been unaware.

## Part 2

The students' responses to the statements in Part 2 were congruent with their remarks in Part 1. Table 2 shows the distribution of responses to the statements, the frequency of responses in numbers and percentages, the median score for each statement, and the means and standard deviations of the students' replies.

Table 2. *Students' Responses (in %) to Statements Describing their Experience of Art Work in Community Service (1 = not true, 7 = very true; N = 113-117)<sup>1</sup>*

SD	M	Mdn	N	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Statements describing the student's personal experience of art work in community service
<b>Contribution to professional insights</b>											
1.96	5.59	7.00	116	51.7 (60)	17.2 (20)	6.9 (8)	7.8 (9)	4.3 (5)	3.4 (4)	8.6 (10)	I encountered educational frameworks and diverse populations that I didn't know before
1.78	5.35	6.00	117	38.5 (45)	15.4 (18)	19.7 (23)	10.3 (12)	7.7 (9)	2.6 (3)	6.0 (7)	Through this activity I understood the need to contribute to the community and I developed civic commitment
1.97	4.48	5.00	115	19.1 (22)	19.1 (22)	13.0 (15)	18.3 (21)	12.2 (14)	6.1 (7)	12.2 (14)	I came to understand the difference between teacher and educator
1.82	4.53	5.00	116	19.0 (22)	12.9 (15)	20.7 (24)	19.8 (23)	12.1 (14)	7.8 (9)	7.8 (9)	This activity helped me to clarify what kind of educational setting is suitable for me
<b>The feelings that accompanied the experience</b>											
2.04	4.91	6.00	117	30.8 (36)	19.7 (23)	11.1 (13)	15.4 (18)	4.3 (5)	8.5 (10)	10.3 (12)	I learned to cope with personal limitations resulting from the meeting with new populations with special needs
1.93	3.85	4.00	117	12.8 (15)	16.2 (19)	17.1 (20)	17.9 (21)	11.1 (13)	12.0 (14)	2.8 (15)	I felt that I did not possess methodical tools suitable for the population I was working with, and I had to improvise new tools*
1.95	4.37	4.00	117	7.7 (9)	13.7 (16)	13.7 (16)	17.1 (20)	16.2 (19)	9.4 (11)	22.2 (26)	I felt frustrated*
1.90	4.03	4.00	115	9.6 (11)	16.5 (19)	18.3 (21)	18.3 (21)	13.0 (15)	8.7 (10)	15.7 (18)	I was able to cope with failure and with the need to recruit personal strengths to find alternatives
1.47	5.66	6.00	117	35.9 (42)	29.1 (34)	16.2 (19)	10.3 (12)	2.6 (3)	4.3 (5)	1.7 (2)	The community involvement aroused my curiosity
1.89	4.91	5.00	116	27.6 (32)	18.1 (21)	16.4 (19)	12.9 (15)	13.8 (16)	2.6 (3)	8.6 (10)	I felt a sense of togetherness with the other students and with the populations we worked with
1.62	5.60	6.00	116	42.2 (49)	18.1 (21)	18.1 (21)	10.3 (12)	6.0 (7)	0.9 (1)	4.3 (5)	I enjoyed the activity
<b>Personal insights (not necessarily related to the profession)</b>											
1.92	4.91	5.00	117	27.4 (32)	19.7 (23)	14.5 (17)	17.9 (21)	6.0 (7)	5.1 (6)	9.4 (11)	I acquired a new perspective on life
1.48	5.26	6.00	117	22.2 (26)	28.2 (33)	22.2 (26)	15.4 (18)	6.8 (8)	2.6 (3)	2.6 (3)	I found abilities in myself that I was not aware of
1.49	5.33	6.00	117	26.5 (31)	25.6 (30)	19.7 (23)	18.8 (22)	4.3 (5)	2.6 (3)	2.6 (3)	I became aware of how I deal with complex situations
1.80	4.38	5.00	117	15.4 (18)	13.7 (16)	21.4 (25)	18.8 (22)	13.7 (16)	8.5 (10)	8.5 (10)	I discovered characteristics in myself that I did not know about
1.83	5.32	6.00	116	37.9 (44)	19.0 (22)	14.7 (17)	9.5 (11)	8.6 (10)	5.2 (6)	5.2 (6)	I came to understand the importance of team work and cooperation among group members, and I identified my place in the group
1.80	5.21	6.00	115	33.9 (39)	19.1 (22)	13.9 (16)	14.8 (17)	9.6 (11)	2.6 (3)	6.1 (7)	The service helped me to give meaning and content to places and concepts that were previously alien to me
<b>Insights regarding art</b>											
1.93	3.78	4.00	117	11.1 (13)	8.5 (10)	16.2 (19)	25.6 (30)	6.0 (7)	14.5 (17)	17.9 (21)	The meeting with populations that I had never encountered closely stimulated me to look at art in a new way
1.95	3.85	4.00	117	9.4 (11)	14.5 (17)	14.5 (17)	24.8 (29)	6.8 (8)	10.3 (12)	19.7 (23)	The activity enabled me to expand my own artistic language

The first theme, "contribution to professional insights", included four statements. An examination of these statements shows that the students ascribed great importance to the community service in developing their professional insights. The first statement, encountered educational frameworks and diverse populations that the student had not previously met, yielded a median score of 7, that is to say, most of the respondents thought that it was important to meet diverse populations and that this was the significant contribution of the community service. The median score on the second statement, concerning the personal need to contribute to society and develop civic commitment, was 6. The other two statements in this theme obtained a median score of 5.

The second theme, the feelings that accompanied the experience, comprised seven statements. The first statement, learned to cope with personal limitations resulting from the meeting with new populations with special needs, was repeated many times during the interviews and was described by the students as a sense of growth out of understanding of their abilities. The median score on this statement was 6. The second statement, which described a feeling of loss of tools and the need to improvise new tools, was listed in reverse. This issue arose in the interviews, when the students stated that the methodical tools they had been given proved ineffective in their community service. The questionnaire shows that the respondents agreed with this to some extent. They felt that the methodical tools they possessed were somewhat inadequate, and a median score of 4 on this statement attests to the feeling. The next statement was designed to clarify the extent of their feeling of frustration when their activities were curbed for lack of time or cooperation despite their desire to help the population they worked with. Here, too, it emerged that the students felt frustrated, although not deeply so, as the median score of 4 indicates. The following statements, in which the students described their enjoyment of the activity, curiosity, sense of togetherness, received very high median scores of 5-6.

In the third theme, personal insights that the students gained during the activity, the emphasis was on development of the student's personality and how it was affected by the community service. The scores on this theme were particularly high. With regard to self discovery, the students felt that the community service contributed a great deal. On this theme the interviews yielded six statements relating to the students' new perspective on their lives as a result of working with the children of foreign workers in day care centers, or with battered women and their children in a battered women's center, with drug addicts in rehabilitation, and others. The first statement, relating to their sense of having gained a different perspective on life following the service, received a median score of 5. The second statement, concerning the discovery of personal abilities, received a median score of 6. The third statement describes the nature of the personal discovery – insights concerning behavior in complex situations, and here, too, the median score was 6. A median of 6 was also obtained for the following statement – I discovered characteristics in myself that I did not know about. These high scores

indicate that working with such populations enabled the students to discover latent abilities in themselves and deepen their insights regarding the way in which they responded in unfamiliar, complex situations. They also ascribed great importance (median 6) to cooperation in the group, and to the fact that places that had seemed remote to them before the community service acquired meaning.

The fourth theme: insights regarding art, comprised two statements, each of which received a median score of 4, lower than the scores on the other themes. However, the characteristic that is worth noting in the responses to these statements is not only the height of the score but the broad scattering of the responses. This raises a question regarding the identity of the respondents. Were these high scores given by students who were very much involved in their own art work or perhaps by students who were going through a period of weakness in terms of their art work? Since we did not collect data on this point, it appears to be worth examining in a further study, which may broaden the understanding of the connection between community service and the nature of the student's artistic activity.

In the third part of the questionnaire the students were asked to add comments of their own. Here we found a variety of statements relating to the personal experience, the meeting with diverse populations, suggestions for improvement of the project, the participants' growing involvement in the community, and comments on their experience of teaching.

The following extracts describe the general atmosphere that characterized the activity.

### **Students' Remarks on their Personal Experience**

I see the workshop as something of almost supreme significance and one of the more important things I did this year. Perhaps it does not teach much in the specific area of education or of art, but its contribution to personal development is enormous and cannot be ignored. The artist and the teacher both need the attributes that the workshop gives to the personality, and these attributes are not in great supply. I am speaking above all of compassion, of the ability to understand the needs of others and adapt yourself to them, and even the capacity for a certain level of self sacrifice for the sake of the other. I think that in times like today, alienated and devoid of compassion, this kind of workshop does what no informative course can do and teaches people the things that are really important, things that should be deep in the soul of every teacher and every artist – human values. I certainly think that we should continue with the workshop and even go much further – I am quite sure that the aim of the school is to produce teachers who are artists in spirit and not only in mind (questionnaire 4).

I think that this experience of activity in a strange place and reality is something very special and rare. I would not have reached this population without the project and I have no doubt that this period was meaningful for me (questionnaire 25).

The Pardes Daka project is the most meaningful thing that I have done at the School of Art in the past two years. The sense of mission and the team work with a new population were instructive and productive both in terms of the perception of art and its place in society and of my personal experience and the work with the children (questionnaire 37).

The personal experience in the community project was more powerful and meaningful than any other educational activity in the framework of studies in the School of Art. I would be happy to take part in future activities in the project (questionnaire. 36).

The importance of community projects in the framework of teacher training and art studies is crucial in my opinion. Pardes Daka changed my perspective on disadvantaged populations and the special needs of communities and projects of this kind (questionnaire 43).

I want to state that my participation in community service gave me a great deal both as a teacher and as a person. It is an experience that I think everybody should undergo, especially people whose profession is teaching, which is a role of caring and giving (student 41).

**Students' Remarks on the Meeting with Diverse Populations** (prisoners, battered women, children of foreign workers, children from depressed areas in the heart of Tel Aviv.

The work with non-mainstream populations is an important variation in our learning process at the School of Art, a variation that enables us to experience the fringes of society, to acquire tolerance towards the different and to build tools for working in an alternative and personal way. To learn to see the person facing you and not just see what you think of him. Here the real process of learning and education takes place and not in gray formal frameworks that do not encourage creative thinking and different experiences with society (questionnaire 19).

### **Suggestions for Improvement and Addition of More Projects in the Future and Comments on the Curriculum**

Important, important, important, a project that will shatter the bubble for anyone who is still inside it, more relevant and meaningful than any educational institute of the Ministry of Education (questionnaire 68).

The experience of working in a group of students from the School of Art was not easy at all. The combination of lots of "ideals" sometimes leads to explosions. But I think community service should be introduced from year 1. It contributes socially and artistically (questionnaire 75).

### **Growth of Community Involvement in Students**

For me it is important to know that it is meaningful for the population we work with. I am happy with the work at Pardes Daka because the children apparently have not experienced many such activities, and it is important to me to give them a positive artistic experience (which perhaps is the only way to expose them to art (questionnaire 107)).

I think that the community service is extremely important and essential for the learning of teaching and art, it is essential in terms of ourselves as people, citizens, teachers and artists. I believe that we need broad social awareness and understanding concerning Israel with all its aspects. Also, working with a population that does not consist of school students, both in terms of age and framework, is important in order for us to learn about the development of the child – the human being (questionnaire 107).

### **Teaching Experience Accumulated during the Intensive Activity with these Populations**

I think that the community service is very important and it gave me a lot in the first year just because it was, so to speak, the beginning of the road.... I wouldn't have missed it, the experience taught me a great deal and the fact that I gave ten lessons at the beginning of the year made me feel more confident and more experienced as a future teacher (questionnaire 106).

Thus, the students' remarks clarify the contribution of the community service during their training and indicate the advantages of this service for the development of their professional



and personal abilities. In addition, it is evident from their responses that the activity they engaged in was important to them.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Recall that our research question was: What were the students' perceived outcomes from their participation in community service? This question will now be examined through the themes that arose in the interviews and the students' responses to the questionnaire based on these themes. Hence, the discussion below will focus on the following themes: the contribution of the community service to professional insights, the students' feelings during the activity, and their personal insights (not necessarily related to the profession), and insights regarding art.

#### **Contribution of the Community Service to Professional Insights**

On this theme, the students mainly indicated their agreement with two statements: the contribution that they attributed to the meeting with variegated educational frameworks and populations unknown to them, and the importance of the service to the community and to the development of civic commitment. Regarding the first statement, they reported satisfaction with the fact that their knowledge of "real life" had expanded very much as a result of the meeting, and this knowledge enabled them to see the community more clearly and accurately.

The meeting with the prisoners was an experience in itself – getting to know them, cooperating with them and developing partnership, the feeling that maybe I had managed to influence or change even one person (questionnaire 24).

The students expressed strong emotions in referring to the meeting with new populations, which raises questions regarding the basic aims of the art teachers' training program. For many years the students had received explanations about the characteristics of children of the age of their future students. Their responses to the community service project reveal that these explanations were relevant only to a narrow section of the population. The lectures they had heard in psychology classes described a picture lacking the depth that characterizes the human mosaic. It appears that target-oriented training, which is ostensibly effective, in fact lacks something. This is reflected in the students' responses to the questionnaire and also in their responses to the questions on loss and unsuitability of the methodological tools that they had received and their resulting sense of frustration.

For the art students, the meeting with different populations in the context of the project enabled them to work alongside different people from unfamiliar environments and backgrounds. This brought them closer together, as described by the student quoted above, and another:

Getting to know a population I had never encountered before, helping them as much as possible, using art as a bridge between populations. Talking with children of a broad age range about works of art, the rich experience in terms of learning art, developing discussions with all kinds of children and examining art as a means of forming ties (questionnaire 45).

Thus, the students' profession was also enriched by the meeting with these new populations.

### **The Students' Feelings during the Service**

The students gave the highest score to enjoyment of their participation in the activity, and this in situations that were not always pleasant and were sometimes quite disturbing, such as the work in the detention center, especially when the activity required them to work in close contact with populations whom they would not naturally meet in their everyday lives, or the meeting with children of foreign workers in day care centers, where some thirty infants were housed in a small room without even minimal conditions. Nevertheless, most of the participants gave a high score to enjoyment of the activity. This being so, the question arises: what do the students mean, what did they enjoy so much? Bringle and Hatcher (1996) referring to people's enjoyment of community service, remarked that coping with the difficulties and complexity of the activity while sharing with the group the sense that they were doing "real things" was perceived as a pleasurable experience even if it was disturbing and difficult in practice. The curriculum was enriched and acquired freshness and interest while the students found the studies and the community service a pleasurable experience (Harel, 1992).

### **Contribution of the Service to Personal Insights** (not necessarily professional)

The students reported that the major contribution of the community activity in which they had participated was in the sphere of personal insights, not necessarily concerning the profession of art teaching. This raises the question: which achievement of the project is perceived by its initiators as more important, the personal or the learning achievement? When the student reported that the main effect of the experience was on him and his personality, do those responsible for the project see this as an achievement? Or would they prefer the meaningful effect to be primarily in the sphere of learning and only secondly in the personal sphere? In light of the clear direction that emerged in the students' grading of the statements on this theme and from their remarks in the third part of the questionnaire, it is clear that they see the main achievement as personal development, as manifested in their being better teachers and artists. This finding is supported by scholars (e.g., Harel, 1992). As one of the students said:

I see the workshop as something of almost supreme significance and one of the more important things that I have done this year. Perhaps it does not teach much in the specific area of education or of art, but its contribution to personal development is enormous and cannot be ignored. Both the artist and the teacher need the attributes that the workshop gives to the personality (questionnaire 4).

It emerges that the students feel that the experience and its emotional effect on them will help their development as teachers and artists. They gave the highest scores in this part to their insights concerning their behavior in complex situations which they encountered for the first time when they came to teach art to populations of whom they had no knowledge. These insights allowed them to examine themselves in "real" conditions. The community service connected academic studies with real life in which they had to meet expectations and devise creative solutions to problems. These responses support the arguments of some scholars (Markus, Howard & King, 1993; Mettetal & Bryant, 1996; Sax, 2004) that experiences of this nature develop social sensitivity, positive involvement in the community and civic responsibility in their future life. The students' responses reveal that the emotional experience was powerful, as expressed in their feeling of satisfaction when they felt that they had accomplished the task and their group of students, whether mothers and children in a battered women's shelter or prison inmates, had enjoyed the activities. This imbued them with a strong sense of personal achievement that empowered them and developed them above all as people but also as educators and art teachers.

It is important to pay attention to the experience of sharing among the group members, a subject that received a median score of 6, bearing in mind that these student art teachers attended a college that declares that art is the sphere from which the students will derive the pedagogic tools they need. As far back as the 1970s, Professor Ran Shehori, who served for many years as principal of the School of Art, said the following:

Only out of art itself can such a teacher be molded, you cannot learn art teaching as a secondary subject. The basic condition is art itself, and only later can you be a teacher. And we must not make a common mistake here. Teaching art is not teaching painting. It is not a question of technical skill but of a culture and a world view. You come into the world as an art teacher from conception and not from technique (Shehori, 1987, p. 18).

In other words, the art teacher's training develops from his/her personal training as an artist. This duality is evident in the definition of the graduate as formulated by the School of Art. The graduate is described as an artist/teacher, namely, first of all an artist. As such, the graduate is an individual who is occupied mainly with art and who derives his teaching methods from this occupation. This clearly refers to the traditional master who taught

apprentices in his studio, a figure who became renowned for his artistic talents and gathered around him a group of students who learned from him how to formulate an artistic idea (Bachar & Glaubman, 2007). The second part of the name artist/teacher relates to the teaching aspect and this implies an individual who is community-minded, a teacher who lives in a community of art teachers, an educational figure whose role is to teach the students and cooperate with the educational system and with the community (Bachar & Glaubman, 2006). This teacher has to conform to the methods of the educational system and meet the demands of the curriculum and the matriculation examinations. This figure is the representative of the school culture, and is certainly not an individualist who is absorbed solely in his art work (Bachar, 2004). Thus, the name artist/teacher implies two images of the art teacher, two garments that do not match, and here in our research the students indicate, both in the high scores and in personal statements in the third part of the questionnaire, that working together with the group and the partnership that evolved was one of the major contributions of the activity.

The beauty of the project is in the formation of a group of students working together for a common aim, and if this does not happen it loses value, that's the way it is (questionnaire 18).

This issue calls for special attention. On the one hand we need to ask whether the evolvement of an artist really necessitates the development of an individual personality (Bourdieu, 2005). Art history tells of many artists who worked in groups and exhibited together. One familiar pair in this respect is Picasso and Braque, the founders of Cubism; in some of their works it is not clear who actually was the artist. Perhaps working together promotes creativity and confidence in introducing innovations, making it easier to face criticism together. The students' responses on this theme strengthen the impression that they feel that this social experience is important to them not only as art teachers but also as artists. In the present study not enough questions were asked on this subject and we recommend conducting in-depth research on this topic in the future.

### **Insights Regarding Art**

On this issue the students' responses were less clear. Their opinions were divided concerning the specific contribution of the community service to this aspect of their work, even in the case of those who answered in the affirmative. One possible reason for this is that the questions were not asked directly, and it may, perhaps, be difficult to identify such an effect.

### **Implications of the Study**

The study examined the contribution to student art teachers of community service integrated with the curriculum as an ongoing activity. The research results show the effect of the activity on the student's pedagogical performance and their perceptions of their instructional

experiences and confirm the expectations of the project's initiators concerning the potential advantages of such activity and its contribution to the development of a humane and empathic personality. The results also indicate that integrating community service in the curriculum enriches the training program and stimulates the students to cooperate and take more interest in their studies.

It appears that the totality of experiences promoted the development in the students of civic responsibility and involvement in the community. This leads to the conclusion that it is important to integrate community service in the teacher training curriculum starting from the first year of studies, and to accompany every step of the activity with meaningful supportive discussion. The community service itself and the active participation in the discussions are beneficial for the training of an art teacher who is involved in the community and can combine art with teaching. The results also indicate the importance of including various types of community service and bringing the student teacher into contact with diverse populations covering a broad age range, in order for them to experience the community in all its complexity and form a broader view of the population and of their own ability to contribute to it. The findings also imply the need to expand the research to further fields in order to deepen knowledge and improve functioning in this important sphere.

### **Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research**

This study followed the participants' community service in general and did not focus on distinguishing between the various activities. In future studies it is recommended to focus on each activity and examine the implications of the meeting with the specific population on the students' work. Such a study can teach us of the contribution of each activity - the meeting with the battered women and their children, the meeting with drug addicts in rehabilitation centers, prisoners, children of foreign workers, and illiterate women. Separate investigation of each site may permit more precision and more educated use of the contribution of each activity to the art teacher's training.

### **Notes**

1. The numbers in the cells represent the distribution of answers in percentages. The frequencies appear in parentheses. In variables marked with an \* the scale was reversed because they are presented negatively. The reversal was done for the purpose of calculating the mean and the standard deviation (the reversal is not expressed in the presentation of the responses).

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### Appendix

#### *Questionnaire on Community Service by the School of Art, Beit Berl*

In this questionnaire we wish to learn about your participation in the community service in the course of your studies. Please read the questions carefully and answer in detail, adding examples and explanations of your responses. This information is necessary in order for us to learn about the significance of the voluntary service and draw conclusions for the future. The information that you provide will serve solely for the purpose of the research and will remain confidential.

First name \_\_\_\_\_ Family name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: Street \_\_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. no: home \_\_\_\_\_

college \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note**

For each question choose one option and mark it with an X in the appropriate box.

Use only a black or blue pen

Current year of study: 1<sup>st</sup> year box 2<sup>nd</sup> year box 3<sup>rd</sup> year box 4<sup>th</sup> year box

Major subject \_\_\_\_\_

Additional details on education (indicate whether you have studied in other educational frameworks – academic degree or supplementary studies. Give dates)

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**A. Personal questions regarding your participation in the community service**

Describe the activity in which you participated during your studies (please state which study year you were in at the time)

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What was your most meaningful experience in this community service? \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Statements on the community service**

Below is a list of statements relating to the community service in which you took part. Please read every statement and indicate to what extent it represents your experience of the activity in which you participated, by marking the appropriate box on each row, on a scale of 1 to 7.



Statements describing the student's personal experience of art work in community service	Not true -1	2	3	4	5	6	Very true - 2
<b>Contribution to professional insights</b>							
I encountered educational frameworks and diverse populations that I didn't know before							
Through this activity I understood the need to contribute to the community and I developed civic commitment							
I came to understand the difference between teacher and educator							
This activity helped me to clarify what kind of educational setting is suitable for me							
Other (please elaborate)_							
<b>The feelings that accompanied the experience</b>							
I learned to cope with personal limitations resulting from the meeting with new populations with special needs							
I felt that I did not possess methodical tools suitable for the population I was working with, and I had to improvise new tools							
I felt frustrated							
I was able to cope with failure and with the need to recruit personal strengths to find alternatives							
The community involvement aroused my curiosity							
I felt a sense of togetherness with the other students and with the populations we worked with							
I enjoyed the activity							
Other (please elaborate)							
<b>Personal insights (not necessarily related to the profession)</b>							
I acquired a new perspective on life							
I found abilities in myself that I was not aware of							
I became aware of how I deal with complex situations							
I discovered characteristics in myself that I did not know about							
I came to understand the importance of team work and cooperation among group members, and I identified my place in the group							
The service helped me to give meaning and content to places and concepts that were previously alien to me							
Other (please elaborate)							
<b>Insights regarding art</b>							
The meeting with populations that I had never encountered closely stimulated me to look at art in a new way							
The activity enabled me to expand my own artistic language							

**C. Further comments**

In this space you are invited to express your thoughts, feelings, impressions, criticism, and anything else you wish to add concerning the community service and your participation in it.

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