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Teachers' Choice of Teaching Strategies for Dealing with Socio-Moral Dilemmas in the Elementary School

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ABSTRACT *Decision-making skills and coping with dilemmas are among the goals of educational systems worldwide. This study examines 480 elementary school teachers' strategies for coping with socio-moral conflicts which arise in the classroom. Based on Oser and Althof's (1993) models for decision-making in interpersonal conflicts in the classroom and school contexts, we examined seven teaching strategies: avoiding, delegating to parents, delegating to school authorities, unilateral decision-making, incomplete discourse, complete discourse and dialogue. Teachers felt responsibility for dealing with socio-moral conflicts in the classroom. The choice of a strategy varied according to the content of the dilemma and the teachers' personal belief systems as well as teaching contexts and, to a lesser extent, personal background characteristics. There is a case for developing teachers' educational and social belief systems within learning communities and enriching their ways of thinking about and competencies for dealing with socio-moral conflicts, in the contexts of classroom, school and societal culture, in keeping with pedagogical concepts arising from the constructivist approach to learning and development.*

The teaching act can be described as a continuously dynamic, reflective and complex decision-making process which involves ethical aspects. Using various strategies, the teacher deals with decision-making when solving moral-ethical dilemmas which arise in the multicultural context of the classroom, the school and the community. This study deals with aspects of the professional morality of teachers and aims to: (1) investigate the coping strategies employed by teachers faced with various socio-moral dilemmas which arise during the development and learning process in Israeli elementary schools and (2) define the factors which explain the variance in choice of teaching strategies.

Decision-making and Problem-solving

Throughout the world educational systems deal with decision-making and problem-solving on all levels: from the policy level (the government, state and the district),

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