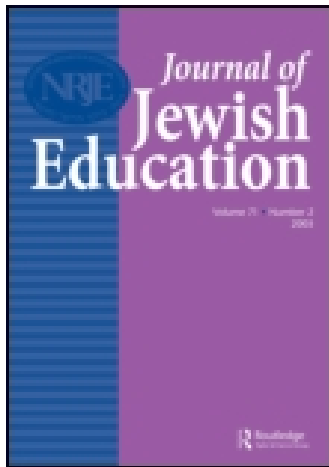


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Teacher Retention and Career Commitments Among DeLeT Graduates: The Intersection of Teachers' Background, Preparation for Teaching, and School Context

ERAN TAMIR AND RAQUEL MAGIDIN DE KRAMER

This article analyzes the career commitments and retention patterns among graduates of the DeLeT program (Day School Leadership Through Teaching) who were prepared for day-school teaching at Brandeis University and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Employing t-tests to analyze survey responses, we identify factors that shape and support teachers' career commitments to Jewish day schools. Our findings suggest that those who stay in Jewish day school teaching are likely to do so because of more commitment to the Jewish community, greater perception of effective teacher preparation experience, and better school support in comparison to those who leave teaching in this setting. These findings are consistent with a multi-layered understanding of teachers' lives and career commitments, which is illustrated in the interaction between person, program, and setting.

INTRODUCTION

This article analyzes retention and career patterns among graduates of the DeLeT (Day School Leadership Through Teaching) teacher preparation

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program at Brandeis University and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR). DeLeT, which was established in 2002, aims to prepare professional, certified teachers for “liberal” day schools through a program that integrates Jewish studies, professional studies, and extended clinical experience. We use Ellenson’s (2008) definition of liberal day schools as “those affiliated with PARDES—the progressive association of Reform Day Schools, RAVSAK—the network of community day schools, and the Solomon Schechter Day School Association” (p. 245).

DeLeT’s investment in the professionalization of Jewish day school (JDS) teaching and in the recruitment and preparation of effective teachers goes against the grain of popular beliefs about teachers and teaching in general, and about teachers in JDSs in particular. Both teachers and teacher educators suffer low public esteem. Teaching is largely considered a “semi-profession” (Etzioni, 1969; Ingersoll & Perda, 2008) by the general public (academics included) and teacher educators have long been mocked and viewed as unintellectual (Bestor, 1953; Kahlenberg, 2007) and engaged in pseudoscience (e.g., Labaree, 2004, 2005). The failure of the profession to establish teaching around a specific content knowledge that is backed by scientific evidence (Tamir & Wilson, 2005) has resulted in constant interference by politicians and state bureaucrats and reduced autonomy of teachers and teacher educators, as illustrated by decades of struggles around teacher certification (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Tamir, 2008, 2010a; Tamir & Davidson, 2011; Wilson & Tamir, 2008). Consistent with this general undervaluing of teaching, JDSs tend to pay low salaries to their teachers, do not require their teachers to hold teacher certification (according to Ben-Avie & Kress, 2008, only half of all JDS teachers hold state teacher certification), and provide unsatisfactory levels of professional development (see Gamoran, Goldring, Robinson, Tammivaara, & Goodman, 1998; Stodolsky, Dorph, & Feiman-Nemser, 2006; The Commission on Jewish Education in North America, 1990).

Counter to these norms, the DeLeT program has tried to recruit and prepare certified teachers who care about JDSs and their students, seek to grow professionally, engage in teacher leadership, and ultimately work as agents of change in their schools. The program incorporates a residency model (borrowed from the medical profession) with some university course work, and reflects a combination of an innovative alternate route program with traditional university-based teacher preparation. DeLeT’s success as a program can be assessed, in part, by the extent to which alumni feel well-prepared for teaching in JDSs and their overall long-term commitment to teaching and leadership in these schools.

In order to assess DeLeT’s success, this article employs *t*-tests and chi-square tests to analyze survey responses of alumni from cohorts 1 to 4 (2002/2003–2006/2007). We use variables that have been previously found to either support or inhibit teachers’ retention and career commitments.

Our findings suggest that those who stay in JDS teaching (as compared to those who leave JDS teaching) are more likely to do so because of: (a) a strong commitment to Judaism and the Jewish community, (b) a positive (effective) teacher preparation experience, and (c) positive school support. These findings are consistent with sociocultural perspectives that view teacher career commitment as a complex phenomenon explained by the interaction between the personal characteristics and backgrounds of teachers (person), their teacher preparation experience (program), and the schools in which they work (setting; Grossman & Loeb, 2008; Humphrey & Wechsler, 2006).

Below, we provide a brief review of the literature concerning teacher retention and elaborate on the conceptual model that guided our own research design and analysis. We then lay out the method and analysis, elaborate on the findings, and conclude with discussion and implications for policy makers and future research.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE PROBLEM OF TEACHER RETENTION

There is a wide consensus among researchers in general education that high-quality teaching has a substantial positive effect on student learning outcomes (Rice, 2003; Rockoff, 2004; Sanders, Saxton, & Horn, 1997). In fact, having a good teacher in the classroom is considered by some as the single most important variable in students' success (Darling-Hammond, 2000). There is no reason to assume that teachers in JDSs are not similarly important for their students.

Why is Retaining Teachers Important?

Concerns over teacher retention have received significant levels of attention from scholars and policy makers in the last two decades. In general, teaching-force data suggest that young teachers tend to leave the classroom relatively early on and in large numbers. On average, almost half of those who start teaching leave by their 5th year (Ingersoll, 2001).

Teacher retention is considered a major factor in the development of effective teachers. Studies suggest that teachers benefit from spending several years in the classroom under the mentorship of an experienced master teacher, learning the craft and improving their skills. There is a consensus among researchers who employ both qualitative and quantitative methods that, on average, a beginning teacher needs at least 3–5 years to develop and elevate significantly his/her teaching potential (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Huberman, 1989; Rockoff, 2004), which further reinforces the importance of finding ways to facilitate teacher retention. Early attrition of teachers has

bleak consequences for the vitality and finances of schools (Ingersoll, 2001), not to mention a significant negative impact on student learning (Grissmer, Flanagan, Kawata, & Williamson, 2000).

Teacher Retention in Jewish Day Schools

Past studies of JDS teachers warned of high attrition rates among beginning teachers (Kelner, Rabkin, Saxe, & Sheingold, 2005) and the “graying” of the Jewish teaching force (Ben-Avie & Kress, 2008). Unfortunately, most large-scale studies provide informative snapshots of the realities in day schools, but do not offer systematic analysis based on longitudinal data collected from beginning teachers (like those offered by The Schools and Staffing Survey [SASS] and The Teacher Follow-up Survey). Furthermore, current literature does not provide a clear picture of teacher retention and careers in each of the JDS segments (e.g., Orthodox, Schechter, community).

Some of the reasons for teacher attrition are uniquely related to the context of Jewish day schooling. For example, Jewish day school teachers are offered relatively low salaries and often do not enjoy retirement and health benefits that may help retain some of their counterparts in the public school system. Other factors that may contribute to teacher attrition are similar to those that affect public school teachers and are related to the lack of professional development and support from school leaders and peers (Dorph & Holtz, 2000; Gamoran et al., 1998; Stodolsky et al., 2006), failure to realize one’s hopes to become an effective teacher, the draw of leadership positions in school administration, and a desire to explore multiple job environments throughout one’s career (e.g., Johnson et al., 2004; Tamir, 2009, 2010b).

A Conceptual Framework

Educational researchers have used sociological theories and sociocultural models to explain teacher socialization (Zeichner & Gore, 1990), careers (Grossman & Loeb, 2008; Huberman, 1989; Tamir, 2009, 2010b) and professional development (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The underlying assumption behind these theories is that research on teachers and teaching should consider the context in which teachers operate and of which they are part (cultural, social, economic, political, historical). Moreover, such theories can help highlight the complicated nature of teaching and its interrelationships with multiple school environments, social settings, and networks; as well as the professional, Jewish, and larger American communities both at the local and national levels.

Not all educational researchers adopt this conceptual lens. Many who study teacher quality and teacher education tend to focus on narrow

questions of program impact (e.g., studies that compare the impact of various teacher preparation programs on student test scores). Often in such studies, many variables concerning teachers' background, beliefs, past experience, and the ways they interact with various school settings and type/quality of teacher preparation are not carefully taken into account. Yet, as Grossman and Loeb (2008) argue, the importance of adopting a comprehensive research lens in studying teachers cannot be overstated. In other words, when the context is not considered, the most critical questions about the meaning of the findings cannot be explored.

This article tries to uncover the factors that contribute to or inhibit the retention of JDS teachers. We believe that in order to answer this question adequately, it is best to adopt a socio-cultural perspective that focuses on the interaction between person, program, and school setting. In doing so, we try to move away from an exclusive focus on one single factor, like teacher education programs, as having sole responsibility for the retention of teachers. Instead, we agree with Johnson and Birkeland (2003), for example, who argue that researchers must also take into account what candidates bring to teaching and learning to teach, and consider how well schools support their continuing development as teachers. A nice illustration of this approach can be found in a recent study of teacher preparation in general education, which concludes that,

Teacher candidates' preparation and teaching ability are shaped by the interaction of three forces: their personal background (academic record and previous classroom experience), their formal training (the coursework they experience), and the context of their school placement (principal and mentor support, professional community, and availability of materials). These three factors—personal background, preparation, and school context—define the candidates' paths into the teaching profession. (Humphrey & Wechsler, 2006, pp. 46–47)

Applying such a perspective to the case of JDS teachers requires some adjustments to the general model. In Figure 1 we illustrate in broad strokes a "Jewish" version of this model, laying out relationships between the prime factors that might affect the careers of JDS teachers. These factors are: (a) personal background and beliefs, (b) teacher preparation, and (c) school setting.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND BELIEFS

We hypothesize that JDS teachers are more likely to stay in teaching if they grow up developing strong affiliation with and desire to serve the Jewish community. Recent research on elite college graduates who chose to teach in urban, catholic, and Jewish schools supports this contention, showing that teachers' commitment to the profession could be rooted in strong personal

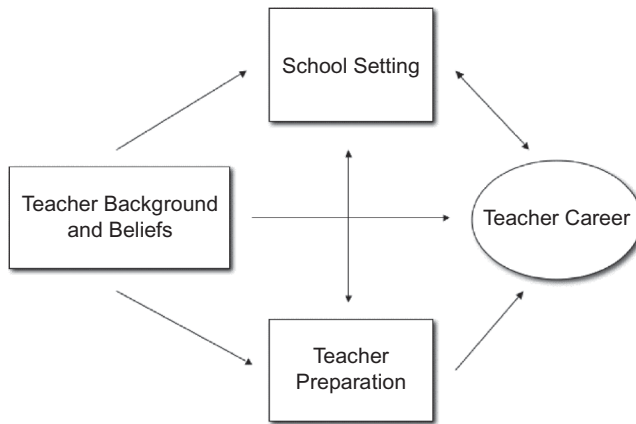


FIGURE 1. A conceptual model of JDS teachers' careers and the factors shaping them.

beliefs or ideas—like a commitment to social justice in the case of some urban public school teachers (e.g., Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003; Tamir, 2009), or religious/communal commitments as in the case of Catholic school teachers (DeFra & Scully, 2007) and JDS teachers (Tamir, 2010b). In fact, many of these mission-based teacher education programs intentionally recruit teachers who already have developed strong convictions and ideological/religious beliefs, so that teacher preparation is used to further strengthen these commitments and align them with pedagogy and subject matter knowledge.

TEACHER PREPARATION

The model also acknowledges the potential role of high-quality teacher preparation in teacher career commitments. Our hypothesis is that strong teacher preparation might make teachers more resilient to meet the challenges awaiting them in their classrooms and schools. While most large-scale quantitative studies have failed to identify differences between teacher education programs in terms of their effects on teacher careers and student learning, some studies suggest that the selectivity of colleges attended by teachers had significant positive effect on student learning (National Research Council [NRC], 2010). A previous systematic analysis of the literature by Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy (2001) found mixed results about the impact of teacher preparation, but noted that some qualitative studies reported that “teachers attributed their knowledge of a range of instructional strategies, classroom discipline and management, and classroom routines to their education coursework” (p. 14). Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005), who analyzed case studies of successful teacher preparation programs, found five characteristics associated with effective teacher education programs: (1) a clear vision of teaching and learning that coheres

throughout the program; (2) articulated standards for novice teachers; (3) an integration of coursework and guided practice; (4) a close partnership with reform-minded schools; and (5) the use of teachers' research and assessment to support classroom practice. Our analysis considers the role some of these aspects play in the preparation of DeLeT teachers (but does not amount to a full program analysis, which would require additional data sources).

SCHOOL SETTING

The model considers the impact of schools on teachers' careers. In particular, we focus on school leadership and professional culture as key factors in determining the extent to which teachers are supported to grow, learn, and feel intellectually challenged. School leaders, particularly heads and/or principals, are critical players in this process. Marvin Schick (2007) notes, that

The principal is by far and away the most important person in elementary and secondary schools, with responsibility for the academic program and usually much more. Because of the small size of most Jewish day schools, the role of the principal or head of school . . . is enhanced . . . (p. 3)

Indeed, Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2009) show that heads of JDSs are critical in making comprehensive induction a high priority in their school. Given the importance of leadership support for teachers' professional development and given the prevalence of ineffective professional development in JDSs (e.g., one-time lectures or workshops that do not closely correspond to the daily challenges encountered by teachers at their schools; Holtz, Gamoran, Dorph, Goldring, & Robinson, 2000; Johnson et al., 2004; Wilson et al., 2001), we would also expect to find some signs of a positive relationship between teacher retention and high levels of rigorous professional development that is relevant, long term, and offered on-site. For example, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that beginning teachers who received lower levels of professional development were more likely to leave teaching for other careers. Many studies also illuminate the importance of rigorous professional culture and learning communities among teachers at school and the positive role of having such a supportive environment on teachers' satisfaction and effectiveness (McLaughlin, 1993).

METHOD AND ANALYSIS

This article utilizes data collected by the DeLeT Longitudinal Study. The study aims to track DeLeT students and alumni from the time they enter

the program and throughout their careers in order to understand their background, motivations, commitments to teaching and Jewish education, and career trajectories. Some survey items were developed specifically for this study; others were inspired by and borrowed from several sources.¹ The data analyzed in this article consist of almost all the individuals who were part of the first four cohorts of the DeLeT program in its two sites at Brandeis University and HUC-JIR (61 surveys were returned, representing a 94% response rate). During these years, the program was a work-in-progress, and some findings presented here may not reflect recent program changes (e.g., the move of HUC-JIR to offering a California teaching license starting in 2009).

The survey consisted of 70 primary questions with 100 subitems, grouped around seven topics.² Most questions used a simple 5-categories Likert scale, which is commonly used to measure respondents' attitudes. For purposes of simplicity and clarity, we employ means and standard deviation to describe findings.

The survey was distributed online through SurveyMonkey.com. In order to enhance the study's response rate, several reminders were sent via e-mail and \$15 gift certificates were offered to participants in return for filling out the survey. Surveys were collected from all DeLeT alumni, regardless of their current occupation/profession.

Factor analysis was used to group variables that share conceptual similarities. For example, we used Lortie's (1975) and Cohn and Kottkamp's (1993) model of teacher rewards to group variables associated with intrinsic, ancillary, and extrinsic rewards for teaching. This model helps us distinguish between intrinsic rewards associated with variables like "I enjoy working with children," ancillary rewards reflected in the opportunity to serve the Jewish community through one's teaching ("teaching allows me to contribute to the Jewish community"), and extrinsic rewards demonstrated in variables like "teaching provides job security" (for a more detailed discussion about why teachers choose to teach based on Lortie's model, see, Tamir, 2009).

Finally, we used *t*-tests and chi-square tests across multiple variables to compare DeLeT alumni who decided to stay in JDSs with those who decided to pursue alternative careers.

¹In developing our survey, we found survey instruments that were developed by Center X at the University of California at Los Angeles, the Pathways to Teaching Study in New York City, and the School and Staffing Survey and Teacher Follow-up Survey to be especially helpful. We also incorporated several items on Jewish identity from the work of Bethamie Horowitz (2003) and adopted commonly used demographic items from sociological studies.

²A copy of the survey can be downloaded at: http://www.brandeis.edu/mandel/pdfs/DeLeT_Alum_track_survey_April_2008.pdf

BACKGROUND OF DELET ALUMNI³

In general, when compared to the “average American,” or even the “average Jewish American,” DeLeT alumni represent a unique and fairly homogeneous group in terms of their sense of belonging to the Jewish community, college background, and personal values and aspirations (among other characteristics), although they demonstrate some diversity in terms of their denominational background.

Seventy-three percent of respondents entered DeLeT within 2 years of graduating from college. The other 27% include mid-career changers, former lawyers, businesswomen, and educators who sought a higher degree of training. The gender divide in DeLeT resembles the gender divide among public elementary and Jewish day-school teachers in general: 83% of DeLeT alumni are female, and 17% are male.

DeLeT alumni have diverse denominational backgrounds. The majority of DeLeT alumni grew up either Conservative (42%) or Reform (41%). Twelve percent of respondents were raised in Modern Orthodox homes, and 5% in more traditional Orthodox homes. Yet when asked how they would currently describe themselves, respondents provided a somewhat different set of answers. The largest groups of respondents continue to identify with the Conservative and Reform movements, 20% and 21%, respectively. Overwhelmingly, however, respondents chose a religious affiliation that defies conventional categories—such as “conservadox,” “post-denominational,” “non-practicing,” and “Jewish.”

Growing up, many DeLeT alumni had opportunities to engage in Jewish learning through day schools and other informal Jewish education settings (like summer camps). An overwhelming majority of them attended elite colleges (colleges were ranked by the average SAT test scores required for undergraduate admittance)⁴ and many majored in Jewish studies.

When asked about their sense of being Jewish, DeLeT alumni conveyed an overall picture of Jewish pride and engagement. Ninety-seven percent very much agree or completely agree with the statement “I am proud to be a Jew”; 93% very much agree or completely agree with the statement “I

³The description in this section is based on a report titled *The DeLeT Alumni Survey: A Comprehensive Report on the Journey of Beginning Jewish Day School Teachers* (Tamir, Feiman-Nemser, Silvera-Sasson, & Cytryn, 2010), produced by the DeLeT Longitudinal Study at the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis University.

⁴Universities and colleges were divided into three tiers. In tier 1, which consists of elite colleges, average SAT scores range from 650 to 730. In tier 2, SAT scores range from 580 to 649, and in tier 3 SAT scores range from 500 to 579. Data were retrieved from www.princetonreview.com. For a more expansive discussion about this topic, see: “Choosing to Teach in Urban Schools Among Graduates of Elite Colleges (Tamir, 2009).

have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people”; and 81% very much agree or completely agree with the statement “I have a clear sense of what being Jewish means to me.”

FINDINGS

We focus our analysis on survey items that help explain the factors associated with the decision to stay or leave JDS teaching. In particular, we analyze differences and similarities in Jewish upbringing, professional preparation, and variables associated with the school setting, as experienced by DeLeT alumni who teach in JDSs and those who opt out for other careers.

We measured DeLeT alumni retention in JDSs by asking alumni about their work plans for “next year” and “in 5 years.” We included these two dependent variables, since using only the “next year” variable might not accurately reflect the long-term plans of teachers who were leaving teaching temporarily (e.g., graduate school, pregnancy, or childrearing), but planned to return in the future.

As can be seen in Figure 2, 53% of DeLeT alumni planned to teach in JDSs in the following year, and the same percentage of alumni anticipated doing so in 5 years (note that these two groups do not consist of all the same individuals). An additional 12% planned to work the following year in Jewish education (i.e., other than JDS teaching), and 22% planned to do that

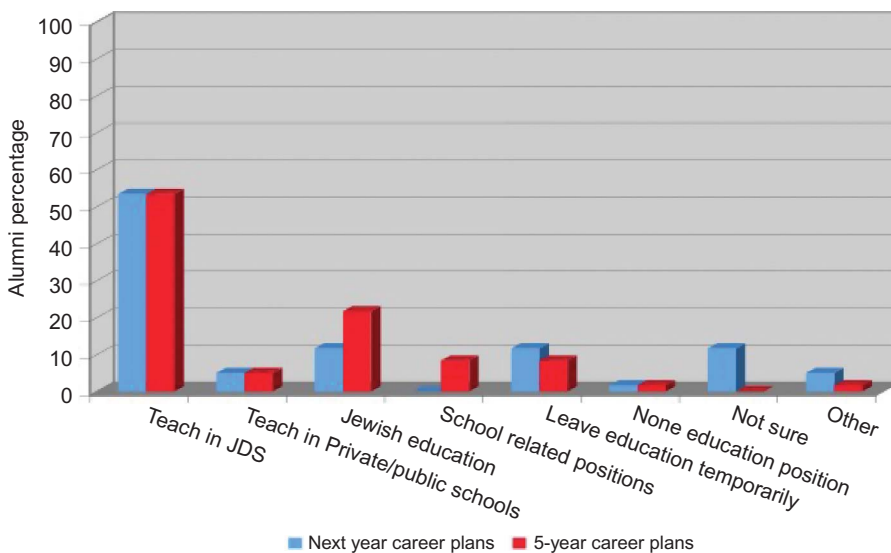


FIGURE 2. DeLeT alumni career plans (next year and in 5 years). (color figure available online)

in 5 years. Twelve percent planned to study the following year (compared with 3% in 5 years). Another 12% were not sure what they would do the following year.⁵ Only one DeLeT alumnus reported leaving teaching and Jewish education permanently starting the following year.

Overall, we find that DeLeT alumni are part of a relatively homogeneous group. When we compared the two groups—those who planned to teach in JDSs the following year and in 5 years and those who said they would not be teaching in JDSs—across background variables like gender, age, college education and schooling (e.g., those who attended JDSs vs. those who did not), parents' education, and denominational affiliation, no statistically significant differences were found. In other words, the DeLeT alumni who chose to stay and those who chose to leave teaching were statistically indistinguishable in terms of their age, gender, upbringing, and schooling. The statistically significant differences that we found were mostly related to alumni's commitments to the Jewish community, the alignment between their internship experience and what was taught in their university courses, and their work experience in schools.

Teachers' Decision to Teach

DeLeT alumni were asked to identify the level of importance that different factors played in their decision to teach in a JDS. Factor analysis was conducted on the 14 items that were included in this question. Three factors were identified. The first factor consists of items illustrating a Jewish commitment to teaching (F1-Jewish).⁶ The second factor consists of items related to the intrinsic rewards of teaching (e.g., joy of children and social justice; F2-Teaching).⁷ The third factor consists of items illustrating extrinsic (e.g., salary) and ancillary (e.g., having flexible hours or enjoying teaching one's subject matter) rewards of teaching (F3-Personal).⁸ Two independent sample *t*-tests were conducted to identify statistically significant differences between those who anticipated teaching in day schools the following year

⁵This uncertainty regarding short-term plans might be related to the structure of the job market and the way young professionals conduct themselves today (Johnson et al., 2004) and/or to the fact that JDSs do not offer tenure to their teachers, which makes teachers less certain about their short-term professional plans.

⁶This factor consists of the following items: (a) teaching allows me to contribute to the Jewish community; (b) it is fulfilling to incorporate Judaism into the various subjects I teach; (c) it is a stepping-stone to leadership in the Jewish community; (d) it allows me to live by the Jewish calendar; and (e) it gives me a sense of being part of a community.

⁷This factor consists of the following items: (a) I enjoy working with children; (b) teaching can promote social justice; (c) I have the personal qualities to be a good teacher; and (d) I have always wanted to be a teacher.

⁸This factor consists of the following items: (a) it provides job security; (b) there is a lot of autonomy in teaching; (c) I enjoy my subject matter(s); and (d) teaching is a flexible career conducive to parenting/family life.

TABLE 1. The influence of personal and religious factors on DeLeT alumni decisions to teach in JDSs next year.

Variable name	Does not plan to teach in JDS next year	Plan to teach in JDS next year	<i>p</i> -value	t (df)
	Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Mean (<i>SD</i>)		
F1-Jewish	-0.24 (1.14)	0.17 (0.87)	.127	1.55 (53)
Teaching allows me to contribute to the Jewish community	3.63 (1.17)	4.09 (0.96)	.106	1.04 (55)
It is fulfilling to incorporate Judaism into the various subjects I teach*	3.79 (0.98)	4.25 (0.8)	.059	1.93 (53)
It's a stepping stone to leadership in the Jewish community	2.88 (1.56)	2.88 (1.26)	.989	-0.13 (55)
It allows me to live by the Jewish calendar	3.21 (1.22)	3.56 (1.11)	.26	1.14 (54)
It gives me a sense of being part of a community	3.96 (0.98)	3.94 (0.76)	.922	-0.98 (55)
F2-Teaching**	0.29 (0.81)	-0.22 (1.01)	.044	-2.06 (55)
I enjoy working with children*	4.72 (0.46)	4.34 (0.94)	.053	-1.99 (47)
Teaching can promote social justice**	4.28 (0.98)	3.5 (1.02)	.005	-2.92 (55)
I have the personal qualities to be a good teacher	4.52 (0.65)	4.38 (0.75)	.448	-0.77 (55)
I have always wanted to be a teacher	2.8 (1.41)	2.72 (1.28)	.821	-0.23 (55)
F3-Personal Benefits	-0.08 (1.12)	0.06 (0.91)	.617	0.50 (55)
There is a lot of autonomy in teaching	3.56 (1.16)	3.38 (0.94)	.509	-0.66 (55)
It's a flexible career conducive to parenting/family life	3.28 (1.4)	3.34 (1.26)	.857	0.18 (55)
It provides job security	2.72 (1.21)	3.03 (1.06)	.314	1.02 (48)
I enjoy the subject matter(s) I teach	4.32 (0.75)	4.44 (0.56)	.517	0.65 (43)

Note. We denoted variables meeting accepted levels of significance (p -value = .05) with **. In addition, variables approaching accepted levels of significance (p -value = .05) were denoted with *.

and in 5 years and those who did not. Tables 1 and 2 present the results of these analyses.

The average mean scores for the "Jewish" factor and the individual Jewish-related items on the survey were higher for the group of alumni who planned to teach in a JDS compared to DeLeT alumni who were not planning to teach in a JDS during the following year. While the difference between the two groups in relation to the "Jewish" factor is not statistically significant in Table 1 (next year), it becomes statistically significant in Table

TABLE 2. The influence of personal and religious factors on DeLeT alumni decisions to teach in JDSs in 5 years.

Variable name	Does not plan to teach in JDS in 5 years	Plan to teach in JDS in 5 years	<i>p</i> -value	t (df)
	Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Mean (<i>SD</i>)		
F1-Jewish**	-0.35 (1.11)	0.29 (0.81)	.018	2.44 (53)
Teaching allows me to contribute to the Jewish community**	3.54 (1.14)	4.2 (0.92)	.02	2.40 (54)
It is fulfilling to incorporate Judaism into the various subjects I teach*	3.81 (0.98)	4.27 (0.78)	.057	1.94 (54)
It is a stepping stone to leadership in the Jewish community	2.67 (1.54)	3.07 (1.23)	.282	1.09 (55)
It allows me to live by the Jewish calendar**	3.04 (1.37)	3.73 (0.83)	.03	2.25 (40)
It gives me a sense of being part of a community	3.93 (0.92)	3.97 (0.81)	.859	0.18 (55)
F2-Teaching	0.04 (0.96)	-0.04 (1.05)	.752	-0.32 (55)
I enjoy working with children	4.52 (0.7)	4.5 (0.86)	.93	-0.09 (55)
Teaching can promote social justice	4.07 (1.21)	3.63 (0.89)	.12	-1.58 (55)
I have the personal qualities to be a good teacher	4.56 (0.64)	4.33 (0.76)	.24	-1.19 (55)
I have always wanted to be a teacher	2.48 (1.37)	3 (1.26)	.142	1.19 (55)
F3-Personal Benefits	-0.02 (1.06)	0.02 (0.96)	.868	0.17 (55)
There is a lot of autonomy in teaching	3.56 (1.12)	3.37 (0.96)	.497	-0.68 (55)
It is a flexible career conducive to family life	3.3 (1.41)	3.33 (1.24)	.916	0.11 (55)
It provides job security	2.74 (1.2)	3.03 (1.07)	.333	0.98 (55)
I enjoy the subject matter(s) I teach	4.41 (0.69)	4.37 (0.61)	.815	-0.23 (55)

Note. We denoted variables meeting accepted levels of significance (p -value = .05) with **. In addition, variables approaching accepted levels of significance (p -value = .05) were denoted with *.

2 ($t = 2.44$, $df = 53$, $p = .018$). Statistically significant differences were also found in two of the “Jewish” items: “teaching allows me to contribute to the Jewish community” ($t = 2.40$, $df = 54$, $p = .02$) and “it allows me to live by the Jewish calendar” ($t = 2.25$, $df = 40$, $p = .03$).

At first glance, the average mean scores for the “Teaching” factor (and the individual “teaching” related items) provide somewhat surprising results. The mean scores tend to be higher for the group of alumni who did *not* plan to teach in a JDS next year and in 5 years (see Table 1 and 2). In other words, the alumni who were *not* planning to teach in a JDS were more likely to choose teaching because they “enjoyed working with children” ($t = -1.99$, $df = 47$, $p = .053$),⁹ and believe that “teaching can promote social justice” ($t = -2.92$, $df = 55$, $p = .005$). The differences between the two groups were statistically significant for the factor of “Teaching” in Table 1 ($t = -2.06$, $df = 55$, $p = .044$).

The average mean scores for the “Personal-Benefits” factor and the items related to it are relatively close and the t -test comparing the two groups yielded no statistical difference between the groups for any of the items that are part of this factor.

School Setting

Participants were asked to share their work experience in JDSs (see Table 3),¹⁰ and their responses were analyzed to identify the influence of school-setting variables on the decision of DeLeT teachers to stay in or leave JDSs. Statistically significant differences between the two DeLeT groups were found only in two items. DeLeT alumni who anticipated they would be teaching in 5 years were more likely to feel that “[their current] school is engaged in some positive change initiatives” ($t = 2.10$, $df = 49$, $p = .04$) and “[feel] intellectually challenged by [their] daily work” ($t = 2.09$, $df = 50$, $p = .04$).

In addition, the findings suggest a few potential trends in variables that currently do not meet accepted levels of statistical significance. The alumni who chose to stay in teaching were more likely to feel supported in their schools. They were more likely to receive “adequate curricular resources and materials” ($t = 1.71$, $df = 57$, $p = .09$), and felt more supported by administrators ($t = 1.45$, $df = 42$, $p = .15$), but at the same time seemed to have been more critical and felt that “there is a gap between what the school stands for and what it does” ($t = -1.73$, $df = 55$, $p = .09$).

Teachers’ satisfaction with their class placement is another key factor determined by schools that can have lasting implications for teachers’ careers. Therefore, alumni were also asked whether they were teaching a subject they were trained to teach, whether they were satisfied with

⁹This variable approaches but does not meet accepted levels of significance ($p < .05$).

¹⁰“Thinking about your current school (or, in case you are not teaching, the school where you last taught), use the following scale to indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.”

TABLE 3. The influence of school setting factors on DeLeT alumni decisions to teach in JDSs in 5 years.

Variable name	Does not plan to teach in JDS in 5 years	Plan to teach in JDS in 5 years	<i>p</i> -value	t(df)
	Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Mean (<i>SD</i>)		
Teachers share a vision of good teaching and a language for talking about it	3.07 (1.17)	3.06 (1.01)	.97	-0.04 (57)
Teachers share an understanding of the school's Jewish mission	3.04 (1.29)	3.06 (0.88)	.93	0.09 (57)
Teachers have regular times to meet with colleagues to work on issues of teaching/learning	3.07 (1.57)	3.19 (1.26)	.76	0.30 (50)
Teachers have regular opportunities for professional development	3.3 (1.2)	3.09 (1.17)	.52	-0.65 (57)
Teachers have opportunities for professional advancement in this school	2.63 (1.33)	2.66 (1.33)	.94	-0.41 (57)
I am intellectually challenged by my daily work**	3.41 (1.19)	4 (0.95)	.04	2.09 (50)
Teachers have adequate curricular resources and materials*	2.93 (1.38)	3.5 (1.19)	.09	1.71 (57)
I am satisfied with my class size(s)	3.93 (1.17)	3.81 (0.98)	.67	-0.42 (56)
The schools physical facility adequately supports the instructional program	3.11 (1.34)	3.42 (1.48)	.41	0.83 (56)
Teachers are not unduly burdened with paperwork and non-instructional responsibilities	3.19 (1.44)	3.48 (1.12)	.41	0.84 (47)
There is a gap between what the school stands for and what it does*	2.73 (1.48)	2.13 (1.15)	.09	-1.73 (55)
The school supports the teaching practices I learned in DeLeT	3.54 (1.3)	3.53 (1.02)	.98	-0.23 (46)
Administrators support and value teachers' work	3.37 (1.47)	3.84 (0.92)	.15	1.45 (42)
My school is engaged in some positive change initiatives**	3.56 (1.15)	4.13 (0.88)	.04	2.01 (48)
School takes the needs of beginning/experienced teachers seriously	3.04 (1.46)	3.52 (1.29)	.19	1.31 (55)

Note. We denoted variables meeting accepted levels of significance (*p*-value = .05) with **. In addition, variables approaching accepted levels of significance (*p*-value = .05) were denoted with *.

TABLE 4. The impact of classroom teaching conditions on DeLeT alumni decisions to teach in JDSs in 5 years.

Variable name		Does not plan to teach in JDS next year	Plan to teach in JDS next year	Total	Chi sq. (χ^2)	<i>p</i> -value
Are you currently teaching subject(s) you have been trained to teach?*	Yes	8 (53.3%)	22 (84.6%)	30 (73.2%)	4.74	.029
	No	7 (46.7%)	4 (15.4%)	11 (26.8%)		
Are you satisfied with your teaching assignment?	Yes	11 (78.6%)	24 (92.3%)	35 (87.5%)	1.57	.21
	No	3 (21.4%)	2 (7.7%)	5 (12.5%)		
Do you have your own classroom?	Yes	8 (61.5%)	21 (84%)	29 (76.3%)	2.39	.122
	No	5 (38.5%)	4 (16%)	9 (23.7%)		

Note. We denoted variables meeting accepted levels of significance (p -value = .05) with **.

their teaching assignments, and whether they had their own classroom (see Table 4). Eighty-five percent of the teachers who planned to teach in 5 years in a JDS and 53% of the teachers who did not plan to teach in 5 years stated that they were teaching a subject they were trained to teach. The difference between the groups was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 4.74$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). In other words, alumni who were teaching a subject they were trained to teach were significantly more likely to anticipate staying in JDS teaching in 5 years.

Though not statistically significant, the results show that 92% of the alumni who planned to teach in 5 years in a JDS and 79% of the teachers who did *not* plan to teach in 5 years in a JDS stated that they were satisfied with their assignment. Similarly, 84% of the teachers who planned to teach in 5 years in a JDS and 62% of the teachers who did *not* plan to teach in 5 years in a JDS stated that they had their own classroom. The difference between the groups was also not statistically significant, but might hint at a trend worth studying.

Teacher Preparation

Finally, we analyzed possible relationships between DeLeT alumni's career trajectories and perceptions of their teacher preparation program, but found no statistically significant differences between the groups. Among the various variables that we checked, including their perception of the DeLeT curriculum (course work, program faculty, alignment of the course work with student teaching, mentoring in schools), we found that the quality of alignment between DeLeT's courses and the school internship ("the criteria by which I was evaluated as an intern were consistent with what I was

taught in my courses"; $t = 1.86$, $df = 56$, $p = .07$) was the only factor approaching accepted levels of significance.

DISCUSSION

As mentioned, DeLeT alumni share a lot in common; most were female who grew up in middle-class families, graduated from elite colleges, and enjoyed a relatively rich Jewish background. The prospects of finding any significant differences among such a small ($n = 61$) and relatively homogeneous group are quite low. Yet, some research in general education suggest that teacher careers are shaped by a combination of factors, including but not limited to teachers' social background and personal beliefs that are developed early on, and teacher preparation and school setting variables (which become critical during the first years of teaching; Grossman & Loeb, 2008; Humphrey & Wechsler, 2006). Our article revisits and partially confirms the validity and applicability of this teacher career model to the case of JDS teachers.

Overall, although we did not find any clear relationship between the social background and schooling experience of alumni and their career decisions, we did find that DeLeT alumni (pre-preparation) beliefs and commitments to teaching and Jewish education were associated with their anticipated careers. The alumni who stayed in teaching and envisioned a future as day school teachers were more likely to feel a stronger sense of commitment to the Jewish community. This finding confirms previous accounts that found communal, religious, and ideological commitments to be a potent consideration in Catholic and urban teachers' career decisions (DelFra & Scully, 2007; Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003; Quartz et al., 2008; Tamir, 2009, 2010b).

In contrast to what we expected, DeLeT alumni who said they would stay in teaching were less likely to choose teaching because they enjoy working with children. While this might seem surprising, we suggest two possible explanations to help interpret this finding. First, DeLeT teachers who planned to continue teaching might hold a less idealized vision of the teacher-student relationship. Second, alumni who left teaching might have entered the program with somewhat inflated expectations about the kind of relationships they would like to foster with students, and when they found out that their hopes were not met, they preferred to leave. It would be interesting to follow up with this investigation, as we have not seen any research that probes this issue or reports a similar finding.

When it comes to school setting and classroom assignments, which are directly affected by the culture and leadership of a particular school, our findings are consistent with similar findings from general education. The trends suggest that teachers who felt intellectually challenged by their work, had sufficient curricular resources, felt that their work environment

was progressing in the right direction, and felt that their school is genuine about what it believes and does were more likely to stay in JDS teaching. In addition, as in general education, teachers who reported teaching a subject matter they were trained to teach were more likely to stay.

Finally, the literature suggests that effective teacher preparation can make a difference in teacher retention. In an effort to prepare teachers who will stay in the field, DeLeT is trying to incorporate the best elements of traditional university-based teacher preparation and alternative route programs (see also Feiman-Nemser & Tamir, 2010). While the data suggest that those who anticipated a career in teaching were more likely to feel that the integration of DeLeT's coursework and guided practice in schools was effective, the difference was not statistically significant and thus does not establish a strong and clear link between teacher preparation and retention in the field.

Implications

The findings reported in this article should be understood and treated with caution. They are part of an ongoing longitudinal study of the DeLeT program alumni that began in 2007–2008, and since DeLeT is still a young program that prepares a relatively small number of teachers annually, many of the findings reflect trends but do not yet meet accepted levels of significance.

Given the limitation of having a relatively small data set, it is too early to offer clear policy implications. Taking a more cautious approach, we argue that the trends we have identified call for attention because they are consistent with previous research and theoretical models that have been studied in general education. If the current statistical trends persist in future surveys, here are several implications that Jewish teacher preparation programs, JDSs, Jewish federations, and philanthropists might want to consider:

1. In terms of teacher recruitment, admission committees might want to look more carefully into the Jewish “journeys” of applicants, that is, the ways in which they articulate the development of their Jewish identity and affiliation with the Jewish community. For example, an applicant who, in addition to a stellar academic background and a desire to work with children, is also able to express a strong genuine passion for teaching in a JDS and is able to articulate what exactly makes her excited about teaching Jewish children in a Jewish setting would seem a strong candidate that is likely to stay in teaching for a substantial period of time.
2. The problems of teacher retention cannot be solved by effective recruitment alone. Jewish teacher preparation programs have an important role to play in strengthening the commitments of their graduates to JDSs.

- These programs might like to consider how to create meaningful opportunities in which students can explore and strengthen their identity as professional teachers with a deep commitment to the Jewish community.
3. Effective recruitment and high quality teacher preparation are important first steps for teacher retention. Yet, our findings suggest that when DeLeT teachers feel intellectually challenged and supported in their schools, they are also more likely to stay for the long term. This means that JDSs, despite recent financial hardships, should consider carefully the potential negative impact that cutting back on resources devoted to induction, mentoring, and professional support might have on their teachers' willingness to stay (for an elaborate analysis on the impact of the recession on JDS, see Tamir, 2011, forthcoming).

Future Research

As we continue with this research project and expand the number of teachers responding to our surveys, we hope to gain more clarity on how a teacher's personal background and sense of Jewish identity interacts with her experiences in her teacher preparation program and work setting at school. Being able to control for more variables such as age, gender, social background, and particular types of school support and professional cultures, we hope to better understand which specific factors in the preparation of DeLeT teachers and in their experience in schools contribute most to their retention in the classroom or in pursuing teacher leadership positions.

In order to offer more generalizable findings, future studies might want to include representative samples of JDS teachers who were prepared in other preparation programs like those at JTS or the Pardes Educators Program, as well as JDS teachers who were not prepared in such programs, and compare in what aspects of their background, commitments, and careers these teachers vary or are alike. Finally, future studies also need to describe the preparation and careers of teachers who teach in Orthodox JDSs, by far the largest sector in the field. Findings from such studies would be critical for improving recruitment and the effectiveness of Jewish teacher preparation, and would help clarify the impact of school setting variables on teacher career commitments.

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