THE ABSORPTION EXPERIENCE OF GEN Y BEGINNING TEACHERS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE BEGINNING TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTORS

Gila Cohen Zilka	Bar-Ilan University and Achva Academic College, Israel	gila.zilka@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The present study aimed to understand in depth the experience of identity formation of beginning teachers (BTs), members of Gen Y in their first year at elementary school, and teaching students of Gen Alpha from the perspective of BTs and their teacher mentors (TMs).
Background	The purpose of the study was to compare the aspects described by BTs and their mentor teachers of the initial experience of teaching and of shaping the professional identity of BTs, members of Gen Y, in elementary schools, from the perspective of BTs and teacher mentors (TMs).
Methodology	This was a qualitative study. Two groups participated in the study: (a) 75 BTs, members of Gen Y, and (b) 40 mentors of beginning teachers.
Contribution	The findings of this study indicate that the creation of an emotionally and professionally supportive community led to a fruitful discussion on issues related to the process of absorption and integration of BTs in the school. This process advanced their professional development, expanding knowledge, abilities, strategies, innovative pedagogical practices for classroom management, and meaningful teaching and learning in the classroom. The supportive community provided an emotional, professional, social-organizational, and evaluative-reflective response to the needs of BTs, facilitating meaningful interactions between the BTs and their students. It created a space for students to practice emotional

	training, organize and manage behavior, regulate emotions and behavior, reduce feelings of anger, and arouse a feeling of optimism.
Findings	The findings show that there was a conflict between the BTs' and TMs' perceptions of school reality. The mentors expected the BTs to adapt to the existing system, whereas the BTs perceived the process as one of formation of their identity as teachers. It turned out that parameters important to Gen Y teachers, such as knowing the school organization and being an influential factor that brings about change, were less important to their mentors. The findings of the present study reinforce those of previous studies that investigated the employment characteristics of Gen Y.
Recommendations for Practitioners	A supportive community at school is likely to increase the level of mental well-being of Gen Y teachers. To this end, support communities of teachers should be created by form and discipline of study. In the community, emphasis should be placed on reflection and mental resilience in all situations and challenging events that happen to the BTs to help them cope with the accumulated stress.
Recommendations for Researchers	Students need a sensitive environment that is appropriate for Gen Alpha children. This environment must allow for emotional training and regulation, behavior organization, and management to arouse a feeling of optimism and reduce anger. Teachers must teach with love, sensitivity, affectivity, and empathy to develop students' emotional, social, and cognitive abilities.
Impact on Society	To retain BTs and prevent them from quitting their career, schools must ensure that members of Gen Y understand the school organization and are satisfied with the way the organization is managed. They must have a sense of being significant partners in the life of the school. Under optimal working conditions, Gen Y teachers may greatly contribute to the values of education and equal opportunity, maximizing the personal potential of each student and the classroom as a whole and making the school relevant.
Future Research	Future studies should examine the characteristics of students belonging to Gen Alpha. One of the difficulties mentioned by BTs was a misunderstanding of the characteristics of Gen Alpha, which created problems in the interactions within the teaching staff and between the teachers and the students and prevented gaining authority with other teachers and with students.
Keywords	information and communication technology (ICT), smartphones, internship, beginning teacher, teacher-mentor, identity, interactions, mental well-being, the Gen Alpha, Gen Y, teacher retention, teacher attrition

AUTHOR

Gila Cohen Zilka, Ph.D., Israel. Zilka is affiliated with Bar-Ilan University as a lecturer and researcher, the Director of the Department for Teaching Social Science and Communication, and with Achva Academic College as Head of the Academic Department of Education.

Zilka's research aims to explain the phenomenon of understanding the younger generation in all aspects relating to global changes following digital developments in a digital age that crosses all boundaries.