

Building a Professional Identity in Israel: Experiences of New Immigrant Speech Therapists in Israel

Following centuries of exile, the Jewish people have returned to their historic homeland. Yet upon arrival their dream of integrating into the new society is immediately shattered due to linguistic difficulties. This is true for all new immigrants, but even more so for linguistic experts. The narratives of speech therapists that lack Hebrew as a mother tongue display this. Their stories allow us to examine the experiences they undergo while building a professional identity in Israel.

This study, which uses the narrative research method, is based on the analysis of the stories of five immigrant speech therapists. The theoretical framework of this research focuses on three specific areas: a) immigration and absorption; b) multi-professional teamwork; and the role of the speech therapist.

According to the literature, the immigrant experience is subjectively based in the construction of a social identity, while language acquisition poses a major difficulty when adjusting to life in a new land. This barrier becomes weightier when new immigrants choose to work as speech therapists whose job requires expertise in acquiring oral and written skills. The findings focus on each story individually. The analysis shows that the period before immigration affects integration and that immigrant speech therapists go through a complex professional process on the path to realizing their dream of working as speech therapists in Israel.

Keywords: Immigration to Israel (Aliyah), professional identity, immigration absorption