# Varia

## The role of private and institutional support to favor work-family integration in pre-service and in-service teachers: self-related vs. context-related arguments

**Francesco Arcidiacono,** University of Teacher Education BEJUNE (Switzerland)
**Antonio Bova,** Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan (Italy)
**Ina Ben-Uri,** Beit Berl College (Israel), The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel)
**Giuseppe Melfi,** University of Teacher Education BEJUNE (Switzerland)

*Research related to the integration of the demands of work and family highlights the difficulties teachers experience in handling their careers and private lives. The goal of this study is to examine the arguments they use to explain what might make work-family integration easier for them. A questionnaire has been administered to 728 teachers in Israel and Switzerland, two countries dealing with teachers' work-family relations. Through a qualitative analysis of the types of arguments advanced by teachers, the reconstruction of their reasoning (for the topical and endoxical components) has been performed. Results reveal that the support of family and institution are advanced as critical aspects in both countries. Implications in shaping teachers' attitudes towards work-family integration are discussed.*

## 1. Introduction

In Western countries, much of the research related to the quality of integration of professional and personal life has focused on the conflict between work and family (Cullati, 2014). In particular, career and domestic demands are often perceived as not easily balanced, in that commitment in one role is made more difficult by the involvement in the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For example, different studies have shown that work-family conflict is associated with numerous adverse outcomes, such as increased levels of marital and intimate dissatisfaction (Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Frone et al., 1997; Whiston & Cinamon, 2015). In addition, a poor work-family integration might also negatively affect factors in the work domain, e.g. job satisfaction and work performance (Allen et al., 2000; Hoobler et al., 2010). The quality of work-family integration is a valid predictor of both poor physical health, somatic symptoms and psychological distress, lower emotional well-being, and depression (e.g. Allen et al., 2000; Franche et al., 2006; Frone et al., 1996; Hughes & Galinsky, 1994; Wayne et al, 2004).

In this paper, we focus on the activity of teaching because previous studies have demonstrated that the conflict between work occupation and family life is one of the central stress factors in this profession (e.g. Cinamon & Rich, 2005a, 2005b, 2010; Cinamon et al., 2007; Durham-Barnes, 2011; Drago, 2001; Goyal & Arora, 2012; Palmer et al., 2012). In addition, the current and estimated future shortage of teachers, along with high rates of beginning-teachers' withdrawal from the profession, are distressing global phenomena. As a result, there is an effort among scholars to better understand the origins of this situation (Darling-Hammond & Kaplan, 2021; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2018; den Brok et al., 2017; Jacob & Abiola, 2021). Michaelian (2005) and Demirel and Erdamar (2016) have shown that excessive workload for teachers can often lead to increased conflict within families. In a similar vein, other studies highlighted how teachers' perception of the causes of work-family conflict is mono-directional, since the work activity negatively affects the quality of family life, while the private life does not greatly affect the quality of the work (Ben-Uri, 2014, 2016; Cinamon & Rich, 2005a). Although the issue of work-family conflict concerns the entire working population, we decided to focus on teachers because work-life balance is a critical aspect of enhancing their effectiveness and satisfaction also in the context of students' learning. In fact, it has been proved that a good work-life balance improves students' behavior (Punia & Kamboj, 2013). Within the framework of research on balancing teachers' careers and private lives, this study aims to highlight what might favor work-family integration according to pre-service and in-service teachers[1]. In particular, we will analyze the arguments

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[1] In-service teacher designates a teacher that has certification or is already teaching in a classroom, in contrast to pre-service teacher, who is in the process of becoming a teacher.

advanced by both categories of teachers to explain what might make work-family integration easier for them. To reach our goal, we have opted for an idiographic methodology based on the contemporary argumentation theory. The approach relies on the Argumentum Model of Topics (hereafter AMT), a model that serves to systematically reconstruct the inferential configuration of arguments, that is, "to illustrate the structure of reasoning that underlies the connection between a standpoint and its supporting arguments" (Rigotti & Greco Morasso, 2010, p. 490).

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 includes a concise review of work-family conflict in the teaching context, and the anticipated perceptions of work-family relations among teachers is then discussed. In Section 3, aims and research questions are presented. The methodological elements and the analytical approach adopted for the analysis are illustrated in Section 4. Some exemplary arguments that bring to light the results obtained through a qualitative analysis of a more extensive set of arguments are provided in Section 5. The findings, as well as some limitations and strengths of the present study, are advanced in Section 6 and conclude the paper.

## 2.    Work-family conflict in the teaching context

Conflict is often conceptualized as role pressures from work and family that are mutually incompatible, in that participation in one role is made more difficult by participation in the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). According to Frone (2003), the relevant terms are work-to-family conflict (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC). As indicated in a previous paper (Ben-Uri et al., 2022), the first occurs when work-related demands interfere with home responsibilities (for example, when work assignments occupy non-working hours and limit the person's time and space to attend to family concerns), while the second arises when family responsibilities impede work activities (for instance, when caring for a family member limits the ability to address work assignments). Findings indicate that WFC is more prevalent than FWC (Bellavia & Frone, 2005; Duxbury & Higgins, 2005) and both are associated with negative outcomes that affect individuals (Whiston & Cinamon, 2015).

One of the most dominant factors in understanding WFC and FWC is gender. Several studies highlight women's experience of integrating family life with professional demands as more challenging compared to that of men. The most common explanation for this aspect is that, generally, women are still traditionally more engaged than men in a large share of housework and childrearing (Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Trzebiatowski & del Carmen, 2020). In addition, support from spouses and from employers constitute important factors in influencing the level of conflict for women in different countries (O'Brien et al., 2014). As the teaching profession in many countries is mostly occupied by women, these findings are extremely relevant, because work-family conflict heavily influences teachers who need to manage personal and professional boundaries well (Atteh et al., 2020), otherwise the overlap between them can lead to burnout.

WFC in the teaching context is frequently associated with adverse outcomes such as reported damaged quality of life (Vega-Fernadez, 2021), reduced eudemonic well-being (Soni & Misra Bakhru, 2019) and the increased level of marital and family dissatisfaction (Cinamon et al., 2007; Cinamon & Rich, 2005b, 2010; Drago, 2001; Durham-Barnes, 2011; Goyal & Arora, 2012; Palmer et al., 2012). Demirel and Erdamar (2016) point out that teachers' lack of time with their families as the result of work-duties spillover (lesson planning, preparing or grading exams, etc.), might be a breeding-ground for the emergence of WFC. Michaelian (2005) defines the difficulties connected to the dual role of teacher-parent as *immanent*, concerning the need to find energy at the end of a workday (as a teacher) and to move in to the role of a parent. Teacher-parents often report the feeling that the patience they have towards students during work has diminished by the time they need to take care of their own children. At the same time, the tasks of parenthood interfere with the efforts invested in teachers' professional duties (FWC) and have a significant negative impact on employee performance (Al-Alawi et al., 2021). From the teachers' perspective, the difficulties in positively integrating work activity and family life stem from the fact that the work setting is practically the same as the home environment.

The uniqueness of the conflict between the roles of teacher and parent is expressed in several studies (Ben-Uri, 2014, 2016; Palmer et al., 2012). Cinamon and Rich (2005a) point out that WFC among teachers, unlike other occupations, is unavoidable in their professional lives. Demirel and Erdamar (2016) highlight that the levels of job and life satisfaction along with WFC directly affect the quality of teaching. Similar results were also found by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) and by Cinamon and Rich (2005b): the conflict intensity depends on the level of centrality and salience the teacher attributes to the work activity and to their family life. Cinamon et al. (2007) focused on teachers' work and family support, as well as on stress variables related

to work and family relations. The researchers pointed out that both WFC and FWC predict burnout, while FWC alone predicts vigor. In addition, WFC is connected to distinctive teaching characteristics, such as the investment in students' behavior and the relations with students' parents. By investigating the meaning of the support of spouse, school management and colleagues on teachers' conflict and facilitation, as well as professional vigor and burnout, Cinamon and Rich (2010) found complex relations between conflict and facilitation, and different patterns linking work and family domains. Mainly, managerial support is a predictor of conflict and facilitation relations, in terms of the need to develop awareness of promoting teachers' well-being. Drago (2001) mentioned the organizational aspect as an essential element in understanding teachers' WFC: the supportive atmosphere from the members' management along with defined employment hours is positively correlated to the length of time teacher-parents spend with their children. Another relevant aspect concerns the gender asymmetry that continues to exist between men and women in their work and family roles. For example, there are contexts (such as in Switzerland) in which it is more difficult for women to cope with work and family; moreover, this issue becomes more pronounced when the couple has children, especially because subsidized childcare is expensive and not easily available in some areas. Research has also found that there are gender differences in the social-psychological experience of balancing work and family responsibilities (Gutek et al., 1988; Repetti, 1987). White (1999) found that the greatest satisfaction with work-family balance for women with young children is when they reduce time and commitments at work.

In recognizing the relevance of work-family facilitation on the extent to which an individual's engagement in work and family contributes to growth in either context (Wayne et al., 2007), as well as the relations between the work occupation and the family life as one of the central factors for a successful teaching profession (Al-Alawi et al., 2021; Demirel & Erdamar, 2016), we intend to better understand the arguments advanced by pre-service and in-service teachers to explain what might make work-family integration easier for them. In particular, we will focus on the realities of Swiss and Israeli teachers who share an interest concerning the balance of a professional career and private life, in spite of the different policies regulating their societal systems (see Watt et al., 2012). With respect to the results of a previous study (Ben-Uri et al., 2018), we are interested in considering the variety of factors influencing work-family relations, instead of looking at the differences between pre-service and in-service teachers in terms of inter-group specifications. This distinguishes the present study from previous works dealing with the issue of work-family balance. In addition, the cross-country design of our investigation implies the consideration of arguments advanced by teachers from two countries to explain what might make work-family integration easier for them. Along with the common interest, it is important to acknowledge that the socio-cultural context of a specific society is essential to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives (Garra-Alloush et al., 2021; Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012).

In Israel, there are about 190,000 employed teachers in the Ministry of Education (in 2021) with a predicted shortage of around 7,700 teachers in the next few years (ICBS, 2016). The salary of Israeli teachers is up to 13% lower than that of other similar workers. This rate is close to the OECD countries' average (Wiessblie, 2013). Studies indicate that in Israel the main motivational factors for choosing teaching as a future career are intrinsic (ideological) and extrinsic (a better opportunity for work-family integration). Recent research pointed out that 88% of Israeli-Arab pre-service teachers chose intrinsic motivations and 82% of them note that part-time teaching could allow more family time (Garra-Alloush et al., 2021). Another study which did not find any significant differences between Arab and Jewish populations underlines the importance of subject matter, social utility and intrinsic motivation as the main factors in choosing the teaching profession in Israel (Sarid et al., 2020). Concerning Switzerland, there are similarities with the above-mentioned elements: teacher salaries are not far from the median Swiss salary, although they depend not only on the teacher's experience and teaching degree, but also on cantonal rules. In 2016, 93,500 teachers were employed in 1-11 grades and 26,000 teachers in post-compulsory grades. In both countries, teaching is a profession that has gradually become more feminized and can be practiced on a part-time basis.

In order to connect the theoretical level and our interest in looking at teachers' work-family balance, we will refer to an inductive approach in which, by analyzing the data, we will try to obtain a relevant conceptualization of the issue under investigation, instead of following an already established set of hypotheses.

## 3.   Aim and research questions

Within the research framework on balancing career and private lives in the teaching context, our goal is to clarify what might favor work-family integration, according to pre-service and in-service teachers. To reach our objective, we address the following research questions:

- What arguments are advanced by pre-service and in-service teachers to explain what might make work-family integration easier for them?
- Do the arguments advanced by pre-service and in-service teachers come under the category of self-related reasons or context-related reasons?
- What role do work-family relations play in teachers' decisional processes and professional conduct?

## 4.   Methodology

### 4.1   Participants

The present study is part of a larger project devoted to the study of teachers' work-family relations and the attribution of their importance to life roles in Israel and Switzerland. The research design implies the participation of 728 pre-service and in-service teachers for all disciplines and degrees of education from the Beit Berl College in Israel (sub-corpus 1) and the HEP-BEJUNE in Switzerland (sub-corpus 2)[2]. Detailed information on the composition of sub-corpora are presented in Table 1:

**Table 1**

*Samples' composition*

| General corpus | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Pre-service* | *In-service* | *Unknown status* | *Total* |
| Participants | 450 | 247 | 31 | 728 |
| Median age | 23 | 35.5 | ≥ 40 | 28 |
| **Sub-corpus 1: Israel** | | | |
| | *Pre-service* | *In-service* | *Unknown status* | *Total* |
| Women | 128 | 129 | 22 | 279 |
| Men | 21 | 20 | 6 | 47 |
| Unknown | 6 | 5 | 1 | 12 |
| Sub-total | 155 | 155 | 29 | 339 |
| Median age | 28 | 35.5 | ≥ 40 | 35.5 |
| **Sub-corpus 2: Switzerland** | | | |
| | *Pre-service* | *In-service* | *Unknown status* | *Total* |
| Women | 225 | 65 | 1 | 291 |
| Men | 69 | 26 | 1 | 96 |
| Unknown | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Sub-total | 295 | 92 | 2 | 389 |
| Median age | 23 | 28 | 25.5 | 23 |

Participants were assured that their anonymity would be maintained at all stages of the research. The package containing the information and questions for the study also made clear that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time and that any ethical concerns could be referred to the researchers for clarification. Participants did not receive any financial reimbursement for their engagement in the study.

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2   Despite the fact that the corpus consists of teachers of two nationalities, a cultural comparison aimed at identifying differences and similarities between the two sub-corpora is not a goal of this study.

## 4.2 Data collection

A questionnaire measuring pre-service teachers' future perceptions and in-service teachers' current perceptions regarding work-family relations was administered in the two countries between November 2016 and February 2017, and was presented in four parts. The first section included respondents' personal information (age, gender, seniority as a student, marital status). The second part was adapted from the Life Roles Salience Scale (LRSS) measuring the attribution of importance to life roles (Amatea et al., 1986). The third part measured work-family conflict and facilitation perceptions (Wayne et al., 2004). The questions in parts 3 and 4 were based on a 5-level Likert scale and had been used in previous studies on similar topics (Cinamon, 2010; Cinamon & Rich, 2010, 2014; Lin-Shick, 2008; Livingston et al., 1996). The fourth part included open questions regarding the participants' perspectives about work-family integration when choosing the teaching career. Examples of open questions are: *Did you think of your future work-family integration when you decided to join the teaching profession? If so, in what way?*; *What do you think might make future work-family integration more difficult for you?*; *What do you think might make future work-family integration easier for you?*

The original questionnaires were in English. We used Hebrew versions for the Israeli sample and French versions for the Swiss sample. The items of the questionnaires were grouped in clusters: occupational, marital, and parental attribution of the importance of life roles; and work-to-family and family-to-work conflicts (WFC; FWC) and facilitations (WFF; FWF). A comprehensive account of the quantitative aspects of the study is discussed in Ben-Uri et al. (2022).

## 4.3 Analytical approach

The present paper concerns Section 4 of the questionnaire we administered and, in particular, the answers provided by pre-service and in-service teachers to the following open question: "What do you think might make future work-family integration easier for you?" All the answers were qualitatively treated in a similar way by the research teams of both countries. Some cases were transcribed where this was necessary (e.g. written answers unclear because of their writing style or missing words). Then, the researchers considered each answer in their sub-sample (questionnaires in French or Hebrew) and identified each argument advanced by participants. After an identification of the types of arguments in both sub-samples, the researchers discussed together and made a selection of cases (as illustrative as possible of the various argument types). The arguments of these cases were then processed through the AMT[3]. This model represents the approach used to analyze the arguments advanced by pre-service and in-service teachers to explain what might make work-family integration easier for them. The AMT serves to systematically reconstruct the inferential configuration of arguments, that is, "to illustrate the structure of reasoning that underlies the connection between a standpoint and its supporting arguments" (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2010, p. 490). The general principle underlying the reconstruction of the reasoning behind an argument is that of finding the implicit premises on which the argument is based.

The Y-structure (see Figures 1, 2 and 3) is the graphical tool adopted to represent the AMT's reconstruction[4]. It does not require software to analyze the data, since the reasoning behind each argument must be qualitatively reconstructed by the researcher. According to Rigotti and Greco Morasso (2010), two fundamental components should be distinguished when identifying the inferential relation binding the premises to the conclusion of an argument. First, an argument identifies a *topical* component which focuses on the inferential connection activated by the argument corresponding to the abstract reasoning that justifies the passage from the premises (arguments) to the conclusion (standpoint). The inferential connection underlying the argument is named with the traditional term *maxim*. Maxims are inferential connections generated by a certain semantic ontological domain named *locus*[5]. Second, an *endoxical* component, which consists of the implicit or explicit material premises shared by the discussants that, combined with the topical component, grounds the standpoint. These premises include *endoxa,* which involve general principles, values, and assumptions that typically belong to the

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[3]   Concerning linguistic aspects, we proceeded by identifying each argument separately (by each research team, in its native language). After agreeing on the selected cases, we translated the cases into English in make them workable for all the researchers. The translation of responses from French/Hebrew was performed not word-by-word, but in a way to represent what the respondents were indicating in their mother tongue.

[4]   Instances of applications of the AMT can be found, for example, in Arcidiacono and Bova (2017), Bova (2015a, 2015b), Bova and Arcidiacono (2013, 2016), Greco Morasso (2012).

[5]   For a comprehensive presentation of the taxonomy of loci, see Rigotti (2009), Rigotti and Greco (2019). For a systematic study in the context of education, see Convertini (2021).

specific context, and *data*, which consists of facts or other information regarding a specific situation and include the part of the argument made explicit in the text.

## 5.  Results

The dataset was composed of 560 [n (Swiss) = 279 + n (Israel) = 281] written answers to the above-mentioned open question. A synoptic analysis of the answers revealed that the arguments advanced by pre-service and in-service teachers could be ascribed to two main categories: 1) self-related reasons (N = 122) and 2) context-related reasons (N = 181). In the first category (*self-related reasons*), we identified two sub-categories: 1a) the presence of the family and its support (N = 101), and 1b) the participants' indication that teaching makes them feel good (N = 21). In the second category (*context-related reasons*), we identified four sub-categories: 2a) structural (N = 138), 2b) relationships (N = 26), 2c) economic conditions (N = 121), and 2d) policies in support of family and school (N = 5). In some cases, an answer related to more than one category.

A comprehensive view of the categories of arguments advanced by the pre-service and in-service teachers is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Main categories of arguments advanced by teachers*

| CATEGORIES | N | |
|---|---|---|
| TOTAL ANSWERS | SWITZERLAND = 279 | ISRAEL = 281 |
| **1.0.**   SELF-RELATED REASONS | 122 | 122 |
| **1.1.**   THE PRESENCE OF THE FAMILY AND ITS SUPPORT | 101 | 67 |
| **1.1.1** HELP IN CHILDREN'S CARE | 14 | 15 |
| **1.1.2** COUPLE RELATIONSHIP | 47 | 31 |
| **1.1.3** NOT HAVING CHILDREN | 5 | 0 |
| **1.1.4** FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS | 35 | 21 |
| **1.2.**   TEACHING MAKES ME FEEL GOOD | 21 | 31 |
| **1.3.**   SETTING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN WORK AND FAMILY: PERSONAL SKILLS (time management) | 0 | 24 |
| **2.0.**   CONTEXT-RELATED REASONS | 181 | 159 |
| **2.1.**   STRUCTURAL | 138 | 98 |
| **2.1.1.** FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS | 108 | 97 |
| **2.1.2.** LIVING CLOSE TO SCHOOL | 28 | 1 |
| **2.1.3.** LIVING FAR FROM SCHOOL | 2 | 0 |
| **2.2.**   RELATIONSHIPS | 26 | 25 |
| **2.2.1** STUDENTS | 8 | 1 |
| **2.2.2** PARENTS | 1 | 0 |
| **2.2.3** COLLEAGUES | 17 | 24 |
| **2.3.**   ECONOMIC CONDITIONS | 12 | 31 |
| **2.4.**   POLICIES IN SUPPORT OF FAMILY AND SCHOOL | 5 | 5 |
| | | |
| **3.0.**   I DON'T KNOW | 22 | 0 |
| **XXX**   NO ANSWER | 110 | |

### 5.1  Types of arguments

In presenting the results, we discuss the analysis of three cases that are representative of the findings obtained from the larger corpus of arguments advanced by pre-service and in-service teachers. The first two arguments

refer to the main category "self-related reasons", and in particular to the sub-category "the presence of the family and its support". The third argument belongs to the main category "context-related reasons", and specifically to the sub-category "structural". The selection of these cases was determined by an inductive approach (Arcidiacono, 2015) and validated by a procedure of inter-judges' agreement.

### 5.1.1 Argument 1: Having a fairly available partner
The first argument analyzed through the AMT was advanced by a Swiss pre-service teacher in support of her answer and refers to the sub-category "the presence of the family and its support". The description of the argument of having a fairly available partner, and the reconstruction of its inferential configuration are provided in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*AMT-based reconstruction of the argument "Having a fairly available partner"*
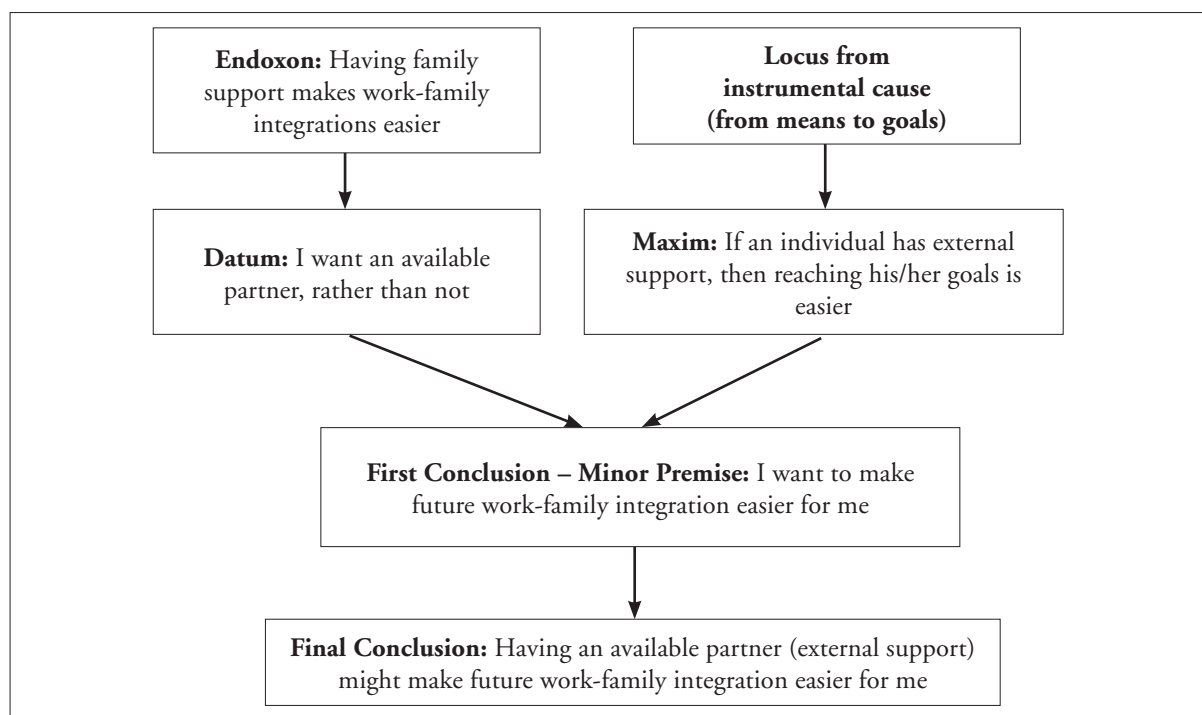


The AMT-based reconstruction brings to light how the participant considers having an available partner as a "means" to reach the goal of making work-family integration easier for her. In fact, the argument is based on a maxim that is engendered from an instrumental cause in one of its particular subcategories, namely from means to goals: if an individual has external support, then reaching his/her goals is easier. The reasoning follows with a syllogistic, i.e. inferential, structure - "I want to make future work-family integration easier for me" (minor premise) - which leads to the conclusion that "having an available partner (external support) might make future work-family integration easier". However, this is only one part of the argumentation: the first conclusion, formulated as "I want to make future work-family integration easier for me", needs further justifications. Unlike the maxim, this is not an inferential rule, but a factual statement that must be backed by contextual knowledge. Looking at the endoxical syllogism of the diagram, the endoxon is formulated as follows: "Having family support makes work-family integration easier". For this reason, the datum "I want an available partner, rather than not", combined with the endoxon, leads to the following first conclusion: "I want to make future work-family integration easier for me".

The reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the argument advanced by the Swiss pre-service teacher shows the relevance she attributes to the presence of the family and its related help. It is a *self-related reason*, i.e. having the support of an available partner, that appears as the most important factor affecting the quality of future work-family integration, more than the characteristics of the teaching profession or any other contextual reason related to the future profession.

### 5.1.2 Argument 2: A great family life would make this integration easier

The second argument was advanced by a Swiss in-service teacher and refers to the following assumption: "A great family life would make this integration easier". The description and the reconstruction of the inferential configuration of this argument - also included in the sub-category "the presence of the family and its support" - are provided in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*AMT-based reconstruction of the argument "A great family life would make this integration easier"*
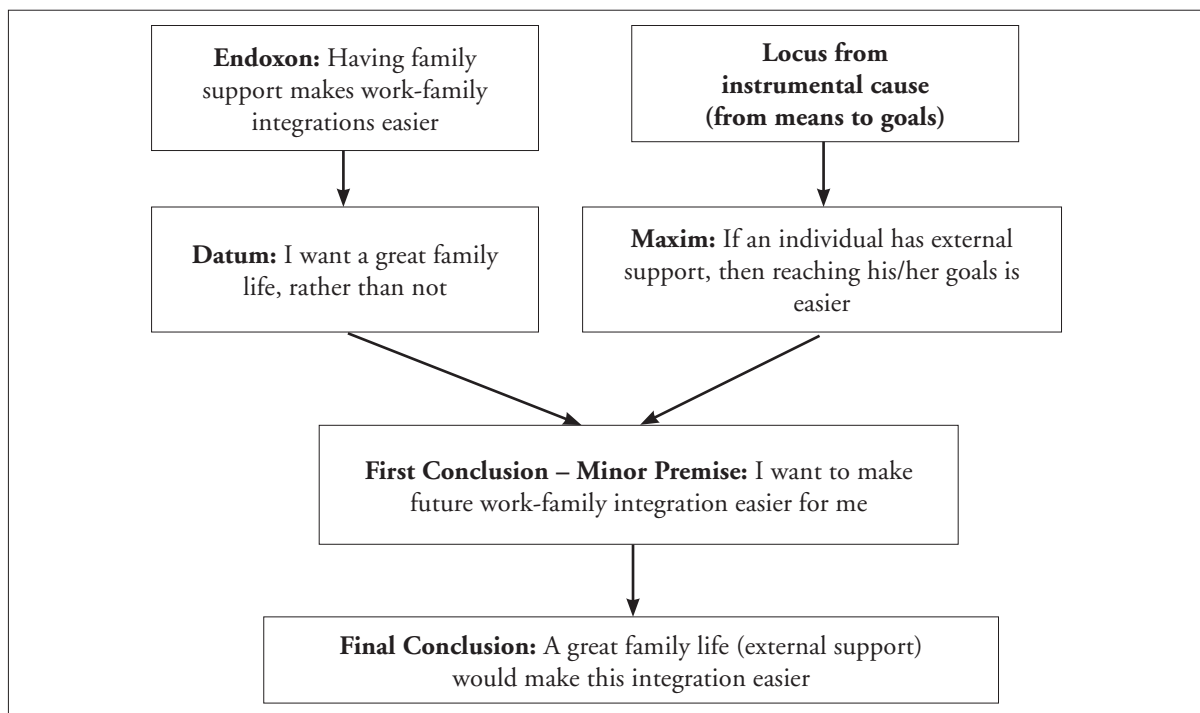


The AMT-based reconstruction shows how the in-service teacher considers having a great family life as a "means" to reach the goal of making work-family integration easier for her. Interestingly, this argument is based on the same maxim described in the previous example: if an individual has external support, then reaching his/her goals is easier. The reasoning follows with a syllogistic, i.e. inferential, structure - "I want to make future work-family integration easier for me" (minor premise) - which leads to the following conclusion: "Having a great family life (external support) might make future work-family integration easier for me". Looking at the endoxical syllogism of the diagram, the endoxon is still the same as the previous example: "Having family support makes work-family integration easier". The datum "I want a great family life, rather than not", combined with the endoxon, leads to the first conclusion: "I want to make future work-family integration easier for me".

Similar to the previous example, the reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the argument advanced by the in-service teacher brings to light how for this participant her private life (*self-related reason*), i.e. having her family support, has a significant effect on the quality of her future work-family integration.

### 5.1.3 Argument 3: Receiving an institutional support

The third argument was advanced by an Israeli pre-service teacher and refers to the category "context-related reasons" (and in particular to the sub-category "structural"). The description of this argument and the reconstruction of its inferential configuration are provided in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*AMT-based reconstruction of the argument "I want to receive the support of the educational institution"*
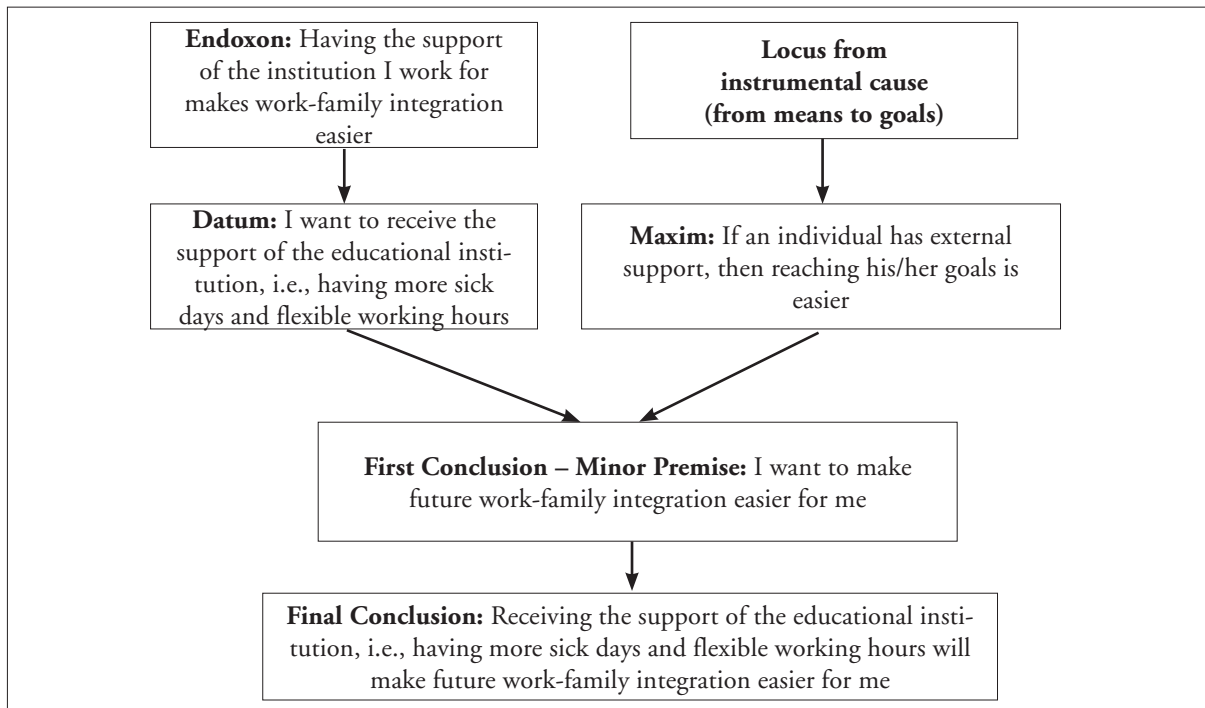


The AMT-based reconstruction shows how the teacher considers having the support of the educational institutions as a "means" to reach the goal of making work-family integration easier for her. Again, this argument is based on the same maxim described in the previous examples: if an individual has external support, then reaching his/her goals is easier. The reasoning follows with a syllogistic, i.e. inferential, structure - "I want to make future work-family integration easier for me" (minor premise) - which leads to the following conclusion: "Receiving the support of the educational institution, i.e. having more sick days and flexible working hours will make future work-family integration easier". Looking at the endoxical syllogism of the diagram, the endoxon is formulated as follows: "Having the support of the institution I work for makes work-family integration easier". For this reason, the datum "I want to receive the support of the educational institution, i.e. having more sick days and flexible working hours", combined with the endoxon, leads to the following first conclusion: "I want to make future work-family integration easier for me".

The reconstruction of the inferential configuration of the argument shows the relevance attributed by the Israeli participant to the support of the institutions for which she will work. Unlike the previous two examples, the most important factor is a context-related reason affecting the quality of the teacher's future work-family integration. According to the participant, receiving the support of the educational institution - having more flexible working time - is more important than the support she can receive from her family, or any other self-related reason.

## 6.   Discussion and conclusion

The goal of the present paper was to investigate the reasons underlying the arguments used by Israeli and Swiss pre-service and in-service teachers in support of their answers to a question on how to facilitate work-family integration. Preliminary results from a quantitative viewpoint (Ben-Uri et al., 2018) already showed differences between teachers, in particular concerning the influence of stress at work. However, these differences have been analyzed here to explore the variety of factors influencing work-family relations, rather than underlining the inter-groups specifications. The present findings indicate different reasons that the participants consider as crucial in favoring a balance between career and private life. These arguments belong to self-related and context-related reasons that are advanced by participants of both countries.

More particularly, the presence and support of the family, as well as other structural reasons (such as flexible working hours), are the aspects most frequently advanced by teachers. Specifically, context-related reasons are a privileged argument to reach an easier integration of work-family balance. The need for support from the employer and more flexible working hours are the main elements emerging from our analysis. This type of answer, indicating demand for structural support, can be connected to previous studies (e.g. Demirel & Erdamar, 2016) suggesting that an excessive workload can increase the level of conflict within the family. In fact, as WFC is more prevalent than FWC, it might be speculated that teachers can experience conflict at home that derives from the problems they face at work. This could lead to an excessive commitment to job-related responsibilities at the expense of responsibilities related to home. Consequently, as problems experienced within the professional field can affect the teachers' lives negatively, a need for structural support at the institutional level is advanced as the main argument for an easier integration of work-family balance.

At the same time, participants very often indicate that teaching makes them feel good. This aspect seems particularly relevant because it indicates a specific relationship between the work activity and the perceived value of the profession for the overall well-being. This is a relevant element in considering the reasons advanced by teachers with respect to the balance between private and professional activities: in fact, as indicated by Franche et al. (2006), Frone (2000) and Wayne et al. (2004), the relationship between work and family is associated with psychological well-being and has a significant impact on teachers' activities. In addition, this element is valid for men and women, as we did not find arguments leading to the identification of specific gender issues, such as that female teachers suffer more from WFC, and male teachers suffer more from FWC (Punia & Kamboj, 2013).

In our design, we have tried to bring to light how a teacher considers the presence of an available partner as a "means" to reach the goal of making work-family integration easier. The intention to have easier work-family integration needs further justification that must be backed by contextual knowledge: these elements highlight how the indication of having support is the most important factor affecting the quality of good work-family integration. Although gender and marital status have no significant impact on variations in the quality of teachers' work-life balance, the perception of family support is central. This argument indicates the importance of self-related reasons, also in combination with other aspects (such as the designation of teachers, the academic stream in which they are teaching, and the nature of their serving institutions) that could affect the quality of work-life balance. These elements should be considered for further qualitative investigations: our analysis of the participants' arguments showed the possibility to infer and reconstruct the role played by work-family relations in the teachers' decisional processes and professional conduct. In fact, the AMT has been a useful tool allowing a detailed reconstruction of the reasons behind the arguments advanced by pre-service and in-service teachers. They both indicate the necessity of dual support (partner/family and institutions) as a key factor in determining the decision to become teachers, as well as their professional conduct. In fact, the illustrations offered as exemplary cases highlight these dimensions of the self-related vs. context-related reasons given by participants.

The findings also shed light on theoretical aspects that have scarcely been investigated in current argumentation studies, namely the inferential reasoning at the basis of arguments used by teachers to explain what might make future work-family integration easier for them. As individual and institutional strategies are required to improve the integration of professional and private lives, it is relevant to support teachers in learning how to cope with conflicts and maintain their work-life balance. An investigation of the reasons behind the arguments advanced by teachers to reduce conflict might be a useful tool to support them in creating a positive working environment and solving the problems they face at work, instead of bringing them home.

We also consider that the analysis of teachers' arguments can be essential in the evaluation of their expectations and motivations. In our view, the AMT opens radically new perspectives, responding to a need emerging from literature: the innovative contribution provided by the application of the AMT, to examine the arguments advanced by teachers to explain what might make work-family integration easier for them, lies on the reconstruction of the implicit premises on which the argument is based. In other words, this model not only aims to identify the arguments used by pre-service and in-service teachers, but it serves to reconstruct the structure of reasoning behind them. The application of the model to study teachers' reasoning undoubtedly represents a great challenge for scholars interested in teacher education, which should consider this approach to work with teachers from their initial training. This will help to make them aware of the relevance of looking at their arguments on the integration of work-family balance in a detailed and deeper way. As WFC can increase dissatisfaction and decrease professional commitment, school actors (educators, teachers and principals) should acknowledge the importance of considering the teachers' perspectives and work together in order to decrease the conflicts that can be experienced at work and home. This would favor a fruitful professional and personal integration, also by the implementation of the model of investigation proposed in our study.

We are conscious that many challenges derive from the specific nature of our research design: far from advancing general conclusions and accounting for a culture-based indication of the argumentative nature of the observed categories, we highlight the possible benefits and impacts of the present investigation for the educational society and for policy-makers. In fact, understanding the work-family interface may have practical significance, especially considering that job satisfaction is related not only to engagement but also to the nature of social interactions within the school context. For instance, in another study (Ben-Uri et al., 2022) this aspect has been analyzed within the framework of the teachers' importance of attributions to life roles: in Switzerland and Israel, it has been observed that occupation role reward values are higher than occupation role commitment values, as a possible sign of good integration of work and personal issues. Another potential practical contribution of the current study might relate directly to one of the most challenging issues in the Israeli field of education, namely the high drop-out rates of novice teachers (Carmel & Badash, 2018). The results regarding the different kinds of support that might help to integrate the teaching profession into general life, and especially family life, might be an important factor for Israeli policy-makers to address, specifically within the professional surroundings of novice teachers. Similarly, our results could inform Swiss stakeholders about the relevance of applying our approach to give a voice to the actors involved in this endeavor. The possibility of reconstructing the structure of the reasoning behind the teachers' arguments could be a valuable way to account for the inferential configuration of the relations between a standpoint and its supporting arguments. In this sense, our methodological approach could overcome an interpretation of teachers' representations exclusively based on their written answers to a questionnaire.

In conclusion, our choice to consider teachers in Israel and Switzerland is functional in detecting similarities and differences that could also be observed among other Western countries. The hypotheses that WFC and FWC are stronger among in-service teachers, as well as facilitations, appear to be only partially confirmed (cf. previous results in Ben-Uri et al., 2018). Further investigations are needed to analyze the differences observed between Israel and Switzerland: at the present stage, the sampling choice and the initial results above mentioned are a limitation. However, the elements pointed out in this paper underline the importance of time-based facilitation (such as the presence and the support of family, as well as the institutional organization of working activities) and the need to consider their impact on the performance of teachers, in order to invest more resources in flexible working schedules and additional support in balancing work-family relations. A future research avenue should consider to what extent a view on arguments related to a specific profession (e.g. teaching) can provide insights and better understanding of the balance between private and professional lives of many different activities, in consideration of the historical, economic and political aspects that impact decisions of policy-makers in different countries.

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**Keywords:** Work-family integration; teacher support; self-related arguments; context-related arguments

## Die Rolle privater und institutioneller Unterstützung zur Förderung der Integration von Beruf und Familie bei Lehrpersonen in der Aus- und Weiterbildung: Selbstbezogene vs. kontextbezogene Argumente

### Zusammenfassung

In der Forschung zur Vereinbarung von Beruf und Familie wird häufig auf Schwierigkeiten von Lehrkräften hingewiesen. Ziel dieser Studie ist es, Argumente von Lehrpersonen zu untersuchen, die die Vorteile einer Vereinbarung dieser beiden Bereiche beschreiben. Hierfür wurde ein Fragebogen von 728 Lehrkräften aus Israel und der Schweiz ausgefüllt. Anhand einer qualitativen Analyse der vorgebrachten Argumente wurde die Rekonstruktion der Argumentation (für die thematischen und endoxischen Komponenten) durchgeführt. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Unterstützung durch die Familie und durch die Institution in beiden Ländern als wichtige Aspekte angeführt werden. Es wird diskutiert, welche Auswirkungen dies auf die Einstellung der Lehrer*innen zur Integration von Beruf und Familie hat.

**Schlagworte**: Integration von Beruf und Familie; Unterstützung von Lehrpersonen; selbstbezogene Argumente; kontextbezogene Argumente

## Le rôle du support privé et institutionnel pour favoriser l'intégration travail-famille chez les enseignant·e·s en formation et en service : arguments auto-centrés vs. contextuels

### Résumé

La recherche sur l'intégration entre demandes du travail et exigences familiales souligne les difficultés des enseignant·e·s dans leur gestion. Cette étude examine les arguments avancés par les enseignant·e·s pour viser une meilleure intégration travail-famille. Un questionnaire a été administré à 728 enseignant·e·s en Israël et en Suisse, deux pays confrontés aux défis de la relation travail-famille. Par une analyse qualitative des arguments avancés par les enseignant·e·s, la reconstruction de leur raisonnement (topique et endoxon) a été réalisée. Les résultats montrent que le support de la famille et de l'institution sont considérés cruciaux dans les deux pays. Des implications concernant les attitudes des enseignant·e·s par rapport à l'intégration travail-famille sont discutées.

**Mots-clés** : Intégration travail-famille ; support aux enseignant·e·s ; arguments auto-centrés ; arguments contextuels

## Il ruolo del supporto privato e istituzionale per favorire la conciliazione lavoro-famiglia in insegnanti in formazione e in servizio: argomenti riferiti al sé versus fattori contestuali

### Riassunto

La ricerca sulla conciliazione tra esigenze lavorative e familiari evidenzia difficoltà nella gestione della carriera e della vita privata da parte dei docenti. Questo studio esamina le argomentazioni dei docenti a proposito di ciò che potrebbe facilitare l'integrazione lavoro-famiglia. Un questionario è stato somministrato a 728 docenti in Israele e Svizzera, due Paesi che condividono problematiche simili in termini di conciliazione lavoro-famiglia. Attraverso l'analisi qualitativa degli argomenti avanzati dai docenti è stata effettuata una ricostruzione del loro discorso (in relazione agli aspetti tematici ed endoxon). I risultati rivelano che il sostegno della famiglia e dell'istituzione sono critici in entrambi i Paesi. Il lavoro discute le implicazioni per la formazione del corpo docenti rispetto all'integrazione lavoro-famiglia.

**Parole chiave**: Conciliazione lavoro-famiglia; supporto al corpo docenti; argomenti riferiti al sé; argomenti riferiti al contesto

**Francesco Arcidiacono**, PhD, is Professor of Developmental Psychology and Social Interactions at the University of Teacher Education BEJUNE (Switzerland). Within the same institution, he was director of the Research Department and of the Center for sustaining and promoting research (CeSPRe). His research interests concern the study of social interactions and the socio-cultural analysis in educational contexts.
University of Teacher Education BEJUNE, ch. de la Ciblerie 45, 2503 Biel/Bienne (Switzerland)
E-mail: francesco.arcidiacono@hep-bejune.ch

**Antonio Bova**, PhD, is Associate Professor of Social Psychology of Communication in the Department of Psychology at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milan, Italy). His research interests revolve around a psychological concern for social interactions at different levels and the study of argumentation in contexts characterized by a large prevalence of interpersonal interactions.
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Dominicanum building, Milan (Italy)
E-mail: antonio.bova@unicatt.it

**Ina Ben-Uri**, PhD, is Head of Master's program in Educational Counseling. Her research focuses on various aspects of teachers' lives, such as work-family balance, counseling and support of self-efficacy, as well as wellness and professional leadership.
Beit Berl College, Beit Berl 4490500 (Israel)
E-mail: ina.benuri@beitberl.ac.il
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
E-mail: ina.ben-uri@mail.huji.ac.il

**Giuseppe Melfi**, PhD, is member of the Center for sustaining and promoting research (CeSPRe) at the University of Teacher Education BEJUNE (Switzerland). His current research concerns various themes in psychology of education, and in particular inclusion, multilingualism and professionalization issues, mainly analyzed with quantitative approaches.
University of Teacher Education BEJUNE, ch. de la Ciblerie 45 2503 Biel/Bienne (Switzerland)
E-mail: giuseppe.melfi@hep-bejune.ch