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# The Teacher as a Supervisor and Guide in the Development of Independent Learners

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### **1. Introduction**

One of the main contributions of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the training that it provides for students, which enables them to enter the workforce. Society regards higher education institutes as the training grounds and gatekeepers for high quality workers (Toutkoushian, 2005). University students and academic staff attain good results if they develop critical thinking skills and the ability to be independent and responsible for their own learning processes. Employees who can think critically are more likely to be adaptable to changing environments, to understand the tasks and decisions they are called upon to make, and to perform successfully in a complex and rapidly changing world.

Selpter (2003) summarizes the need to develop skills of thinking and independent learning among university students. According to him, in order to be prepared for the demands of the knowledge economy, students have to take personal responsibility for their learning and to know how to use their knowledge and skills. Implementing knowledge in new situations, analyzing information, understanding new ideas, communicating, cooperating, solving problems and making decisions, storing extensive knowledge for future use while transferring it to new situations – all these require the development of the judgment ability and taking personal responsibility (Weiss, 2010).

### **1.1 Motivation for the Research**

As a teacher, lecturer and tutor I have been accompanying and instructing teachers for many years.

In retrospect, it appears that from the courses in which I studied I did not receive appropriate training that was directed at developing and nurturing an independent learner. This subject worried me a great deal, and in the course of my work I found that developing an independent learner depends on me, as a teacher:

- A. On my own motivation and my behavior as a teacher.
- B. On my personal abilities and personal skills.
- C. On my development through quality training and by implementing this training in my work.

In this paper, I chose to focus on developing an independent learner as the basis for decisions about the abilities of the future teacher. My research paper aims to examine the skills that are required in order to affect the development processes of the future teacher.

### **1.2 The research's contribution**

The research intends to develop a potential profile of the most appropriate teacher for the 21-st century who can develop independent learners.

The findings of the current research will hopefully contribute to teaching in colleges and to those who train the future generation of teachers, helping them to identify the teachers that we wish to see in the teaching field, and to diagnose the extent to which the candidates who apply to them are suitable this important profession.

### **1.3 Introduction and background for the research**

**The new era** in which we live has brought with it a different worldview and a different educational perception. The postmodern vision is based on **doubt that accompanied every decision, as well as on personal experience and local history** (Darom, 2003, Paldi, 2005).

Unfortunately, the educational system still sets itself a goal of leading all of its "clients" to the finishing line – a "high school diploma", the diploma with which they can enroll in higher education institutes or be accepted by workplaces. At the same time, schools do not pay sufficient attention to the great variance and heterogeneity between the students, and interprets the value of equality as giving each student an equal, or even identical, portion. As aforesaid, the lessons are mainly intended for a uniform level of students with a similar learning style. In addition, no special attention is paid to the students' interest in their studies – to their variance and the differences between what interests each student. The students are usually bored and lack motivation (Paldi, 2005).

In the competitive era in which we live, with the world in a state of economic instability, the competition for workplaces is growing and the educational system, depleted of means, is required to reexamine its place and role in society. Achievements and excellence lead the educational systems. In Israel, tools, the basic learning subjects are revered, while the humanist education, which is based on dialogue and experience, is neglected.

Additional problems that exist in the educational system today:

The training of school teachers today is short and insufficient preparation for the things that they have to cope with in school (Guri-Rosenblit, 2004). The system that manages and that supports the teacher is also going through changes – with the turnover of educational leaders, the introduction of countless new programs and reforms, the introduction of changing demands from the teachers regarding the educational rationale and ways of working.

In addition, shameful achievements for Israel in the 'PIZZA' test and other similar tests are awakening the conservative voices, which are seeking to return to the "good old way".

#### **1.4 The motives for writing the PhD paper**

The dependence of the student on me, as a teacher who constantly mediates between the children and their books, notebooks, pencils and pens, increased for many years. I noticed that the questions that were asked by the children did not necessarily characterize young students but were also asked in high school.

Through my research experience, I learnt that the concept of "independent learning" awakens wonderment, discomfort, a sense of frustration and lack of control and ability to change in the informants that I met in the course of conducting the research. Most of the informants describe their mission as those who are expected to "feed" their audience, in this case – the students, while the students themselves have been accustomed to being "served" with the material, and that all they have to do is "open their mouth" and take it all in.

The students' cry for help and their helplessness are often heard; they don't know how to look for something in the dictionary; they don't know how to summarize learning material; they don't know how to prepare for an exam; they don't know how to construct an answer to a question or to raise arguments within the framework of a class discussion. Many of them act in one of two ways – either write all they know and enable the teachers to erase the unnecessary, or they reply too concisely, assuming that the teacher knows the answer anyway and is familiar with the material, and will understand what the student is referring to.

A similar phenomenon was found in the writing of a personal or term paper in the higher grades of high school. These students did not know what material to approach, what they should do with what they found, how to summarize, where to begin and what the aim of their paper was.

The cry out of both learners and teachers caught me in the process of training teachers, and did not leave me indifferent. The first questions that arose were – what do I do in order to enable the learners that I am guiding to develop independent learning skills?

An additional question that arose was: how will I lead the teacher to become an independent learner? How will I lead him to enable independent learning in his classroom?

When I started planning my research paper, I had no idea what my research topic would be. Reflection on my work and personal life led me realise that I want to develop myself as a person and as a lecturer in the academic world.

**Professional development:** In the course of the past 28 years in which I have been teaching and the 16 years in which I have been instructing, I have coped with the

subject of teaching writing composition and preparing students with learning disabilities for their matriculation exam. I always felt that I was preparing them for coping with the tasks of life, such as: choosing a subject out of a variety of proposed subjects, choosing a model for writing, making decisions about the way in which to write and the actual implementation on the performance level. In guiding teachers, too, I was required to provide ideas, solutions and suggestions for coping with students who do not know how to handle a writing assignment independently.

Through informal conversations with many teachers, as well as a teachers' instructor in writing research papers, I found that teachers do not know how to handle students' difficulties in writing research papers independently. The independent work in class does not flow, teachers feel that they have to provide immediate and ongoing solutions throughout their teaching hours and that their students depend on them every step of the way and do not usually act by themselves.

At the same time, as a person who wishes to become a lecturer in the academic field and to train the next generation of teachers, it came to my attention that there is no selection and no clear criteria that will discern between suitable and unsuitable candidates for leading the future generation.

**Personal development:** This project is the beginning of the road, an opportunity for self development as well as developing an implementation model for diagnosing and selecting candidates who will become teachers. Evaluating success will enable me to grow as a human being and as a decision maker.

**This experience led me to examine, investigate and study the issue further through the current research and develop an original tool called: "DILI"-  
Developing Independent Learner Inventory**

## **1.5 The quantitative research tool**

### **1.5.1 Developing the research tool**

## **Developing Independent Learner Inventory ("DILI")**

The "**DILI**" questionnaire was developed especially for this research. The process of developing a good evaluation tool begins with the structure that the researcher seeks to measure. According to Birenbaum (2000), structural validity is dependent on how well the idea has been formulated, and how well the tool captures the idea. In the background, items were written that relate only to the most universal social-human experiences.

The items for the "**DILI**" questionnaire were based on the professional literature, as well as on the analysis of the interviews (see Table no.2). The triangulation between the findings that were received from the interviews with those that were received from the professional literature raises the external validity of the present research (Shkedi, 2006).

After coding, analyzing and characterizing categories of the characteristics of teachers who develop independent learners (see Table no.1), the central characteristics were identified and the statements in the questionnaire were constructed in relation to these characteristics. Thus, the "**DILI**" questionnaire actually includes two central components:

- Teacher's characteristics – personality-behavioral and training characteristics.
- Characteristics of an independent learner.

In addition, in order to ensure that the results are significant, an examination was carried out in order to ensure that the tool actually measures what it is supposed to measure (Birenbaum, 2000). The adaptation and validation of the examination process included the participation of "analytical friends" (Patton, 1990; Newman et al, 2003). The questionnaire was sent to two analytical colleagues whom have many years of experience in the field of teacher training, as well as in the academic field. The questionnaires were corrected following the comments of the analytical colleagues. It should be noted that in the course of collecting the data, important comments were also made by the respondents themselves, and these were collected as can be seen in **Appendix no.19**.

The participants were teachers and teaching students, who documented their perception and their expectations – professionally and educationally.



The decision about the items of this tool was derived from the literature and from collecting the information in the research field (Beit-Marom, 1986). Table no.1 details the process of constructing the research tool on the basis of the data that were collected from the interviews with the variety of informants on the one hand, and from the professional literature on the other hand. Through Table no.1 and Table no.2, the researcher seeks to illustrate the structuring of the two supreme categories, the core categories and the sub-categories.

**Table no. 1 –"DILI" core categories and sub-categories –questionnaire structure**

<b>Characteristics of teachers who develop independent learners *</b>	<b>Central category</b>
<b>Personality</b>	A. Central category
1.1 Enthusiasm 1.2 Self-esteem 1.3 Love of the teaching profession 1.3.1 Interpersonal communication 1.3.2 Patience 1.3.3 Optimism 1.3.4 Sensitivity 1.3.5 Attentiveness 1.3.6 Self-confidence 1.3.7 Empathetic and caring	Sub-categories
<b>Behavior</b>	Central category
2.1 Leadership 2.1.1 Challenging 2.1.2 Learning ability 2.1.3 Knowledge 2.1.4 Responsibility 2.1.5 Respect 2.2 Love of the learner 2.2.1 Tranquility 2.2.2 Assertiveness 2.2.3 Trust 2.2.4 Personal example 2.2.5 Fairness 2.2.6 Attentiveness 2.2.7 Diligence 2.3 Openness 2.4 Authoritativeness	Sub-categories
<b>Training</b>	
<b>Characteristics of an independent learner **</b>	B. Central category
1. Openness to experiences 1.2 Autonomy	

1.3 Planning ability 1.4 Intrinsic motivation 1.5 Flexibility	Sub-categories
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Table no.1 depicts:

(\*) **A. Central category: Characteristics of teachers who develop independent learners:** personality-behavior, training.

(\*\*) **B. Central category: Characteristics of the independent learner**  
Autonomy; planning ability; intrinsic motivation and flexibility.

## 1.5.2 Summary of the findings

- **Categories and sub-categories (Table no. 1)**

**Two supreme categories were found: teachers' characteristics and the ones of an independent learner.**

**In the teachers' characteristics, three categories were found: personality, behavior and training.**

Sub-categories of the personality category:

Enthusiasm; self-esteem; love of the profession and self-acceptance.

In the sub-category Love of the Profession there are several secondary categories:

Interpersonal communication; patience; optimism; sensitivity; personal treatment; self-confidence; empathy and caring.

Sub-categories of the behavior category:

Leadership; openness and love of the learner.

Sub-categories of leadership: Challenge; learning ability; knowledge; responsibility and respect.

Sub categories of love of the learner: serenity; assertiveness; loyalty; personal example; fairness; attentiveness and diligence.

**The core category: Characteristics of the Independent Learner**

The sub-categories in this section are: openness to experiences; autonomy; planning ability; flexibility and intrinsic motivation.

Full transparency of the data and of the researcher's decisions (Shkedi, 2006).

**Table no. 2 – Contribution of the Professional literature and Interviewees to the Construction of the "DILI" Research Tool**

<b>Personality characteristics</b>		
<b>Statement from the questionnaire (from Appx. No. 19)</b>	<b>Researchers/ Respondents' support</b>	<b>Sub-category</b>
sense of success (2). Boredom and lack of interest (7).	Sherman (2004, 2009). Raichel & Arnon (2005) Leibowitz (2005) <u>3 Teachers:</u> (Appx.10, 11 & 14)	<b>Enthusiasm</b>
capability of evaluating performance (3). Use of feedback in environment (5). Acceptance of feedback (6).	Sherman (2004) Birenbaum (2000) Granot & Melamed (2001) Kashty et al.(2005) Dovrat C. (2005)	<b>Self-esteem</b>
choosing the profession again (1). Great interest in the work (4). Use of abilities and skills (8).	Brushi –Chen (2010) Raichel & Arnon (2005) <u>8 Teachers</u> (Appx.14) <u>1 Principal:</u> (Appx.15) <u>3 Supervisors:</u> (Appx.16) <u>1 Mother:</u> (Appx.17)	<b>Love of the profession</b>
development of a learner who believes in his ability (9). Development of a learner who can improve (10).	Birenbaum (2000) Raichel & Arnon (2005) <u>2 Teachers:</u> (Appx.14).	<b>Self-acceptance</b>
<b>Behavioral characteristics</b>		
respect the learner (27). Variety of teaching methods (29). Questions in class by students (30). Develop the learner's interest (31). Support the learner (32). Thinking in the learner (33). Activation the class in a creative way (34). Creation of confidence and lack of judgment (36). Responsibility for learning and motivation (45). Leadership abilities (46). Leading the class (50).	Perry-Azany (2006) Sherman (2004, 2009) Hopkins (2004) Lewis & Murphy (2005) Leithwood et al. (2006) Bush et al (2007) David (2008) Glatter (2008) <u>1 Teacher:</u> (Appx.14) <u>1 Supervisor:</u> (Appx 16) <u>2 Principals:</u> (Appx.15)	<b>Leadership</b>
love for the learner (38). Loyalty and dedication to the learner (39).	Leibowitz (2005) Bar-Lev (2006)	<b>Love of the</b>

Fair evaluations and grades (40). Good atmosphere in class (41). Personal example (42). Full devotion (47). Mutual trust (48). Listening ability (49).	Carmeli (2006) Raichel & Arnon (2005) <u>6 Teachers:</u> (Appx.10, 11 & 14) <u>2 Supervisors:</u> (Appx.16) <u>5 Parents:</u> (Appx.17) <u>4 Students:</u> (Appx.18)	<b>learner</b>
belief in the learner (25). Clearing boundaries (26). □ behavioural change following training and guidance (28). Enabling the learner to present an extra-curricular subject (37).	Birenbaum (2000) Walls & Little (2005) Bar-Lev (2006) Alony (2003) <u>2 Principals:</u> (Appx.15) <u>6 Teachers:</u> (Appx.10 &14) <u>1 Mother:</u> (Appx.17)	<b>Openness</b>
control over the knowledge in class (35). Full proficiency in the material (43). Responsibility for the learners' achievements (44).	Carmeli (2006) <u>3 Teachers:</u> (Appx.11 &14) <u>3 Supervisors:</u> (Appx.16) <u>3 Principals:</u> (Appx.15) <u>5 Parents:</u> (Appx.17) <u>5 Students:</u> (Appx.18)	<b>Authoritative</b>
<b>Training characteristics</b>		
acquisition of knowledge through seminar training (51). Updating contents and models (52). Relating to what the students do or think (53). Examining the quality of teaching (54). Expertise in dealing with various situations (55). Coping with pressing situations (56). Exposed to various types of learners (57). Exposure to different learning styles (58). Match the material to the learner according to his ability (59). Bring the child to learn by himself (60). Lead the learner to personal responsibility (61).	Volman;Swennen & Jones, (2010) Eshet & Dgany (2000) Kfir & Ariav (2004) Kfir (2008, 2009) Bransford, Darling-Hammond & LePage (2005) Hammerness (2006) <u>Teachers:</u> All the teachers addressed the subject of training (Appx.14). So did all the <u>principals</u> (Appx.15) and all the <u>supervisors</u> (Appx.16).	
<b>Independent learner</b>		
situations of uncertainty (19). New experiences that stem from the learning process (20).	Bar-Lev (2006) Walls & Little (2005) 1 Principal: (Appx.15) 7 Teachers: (Appx.14) 2 Mothers: (Appx.17)	Open to experiences
choosing the learning subjects according to the goals that he has defined (11). Choosing unpopular subjects (12).	Senko & Hershkovitz (2005) Walls & Little (2005) Skager (1984) 3 Teachers: (Appx.14)	Autonomy

diagnosing his learning needs (13). Setting himself goals in light of his needs (14). Seeking help from others (15). Developing criteria for measuring success (24).	Skager in Zilberstein (2000) Ben-Ari (2005) Sherman (2004) Kfir (2008, 2009) 2 Supervisors: (Appx.16) 3 Teachers: (Appx.14) 2 Principals: (Appx.15)	Planning ability
motivated by intrinsic needs of curiosity (16). Learning even in the absence of external supervision of rewards or sanctions (17). Interested in learning outside of the formal learning framework (18).	Birenbaum (2000) Senko & HersHKovitz, (2005) Walls & Little (2005) Bush et al. (2007) Kfir (2009) Sherman (2004, 2009) Vygotsky (2004) Raichel & Arnon (2005) Bar-Lev (2006) Noddings (2008) 4 Teachers: (Appx.14) 1 Supervisor: (Appx.16)	Intrinsic motivation
choosing the learning subjects according to the goals that he has defined (21). Willing to use an approach of investigation, trial and error (22). Lack of retreat in times of failures – coping through an adaptive approach (23).	David (2008) Birenbaum (2000) 3 Principals: (Appx.15) 1 Supervisor: (Appx.16) 8 Teachers: (Appx.11& 14)	Flexibility

### Reliability of the Independent Learner measure ("DILI")

Table no.3 indicates that the "DILI" research tool has a high internal reliability (except for the personality characteristic), in the following Alpha Chronbach levels:

**Table no. 3 – Internal Reliability of the "DILI" (Alpha Chronbach)**

<b>DILI – Desirable situation</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Independent learner</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Personality</b>
129	0.889	0.867	0.9	0.36
<b>DILI – Existing situation</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Independent learner</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Personality</b>
129	0.927	0.881	0.964	0.525

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Role of the Teacher**

The teacher is the heart of the educational process in school. An accomplished teacher can lead the students to success, initiate and act with efficiency and creativity in the school and instill an atmosphere of learning in his class. On the other hand, a teacher who finds it difficult to handle the task can cause great mayhem in the school (Fox, 1995).

A talented teaching student does not receive, in the course of his studies, sufficient training that is directed to the needs of modern society; he does not receive tools for working with all students, with their variance and differences. In fact, the training is insufficient and the new teacher comes to school unprepared for the task – he finds it difficult to maneuver between various identities and is required "to serve many clients" – parents, teachers, the principal, etc. (Yosifon, 2004).

In the beginning of his professional road, the teacher finding himself insulted and hurt by the students' attitude towards him is forced to learn through trial and error (Ariely, 1997), and lacking excellent models to learn from, he uses models that he himself saw as a student (Serggovani, 2002). Within the classroom, he can lead his own educational rationale and maintain a learning system.

Thus, the common assumption today is that we must initiate and mobilize a reformation by focusing on the students' learning and understanding – to begin to change the students' ways of learning by encouraging interaction between students (Kfir, 2009; Alony, 2003). The students must understand that at the end of the day they are responsible for their own learning. The reformation in education should begin with the question – How do students learn and how do teachers teach? The construction of understanding is the central component in an extremely complex process. The system is required to seek tools that will help the students understand their experiences (Brooks-Granon & Brooks, 1997).

The educational system is frustrated with its academic and value-related achievements, as they are reflected in the media, and is constantly attempting to find new curriculums and new ways of ensuring improvement of the learning processes in class and of advancing the students' learning. This involves first and foremost creating

theoretical conditions, and then – a wide-range implementation in the educational system.

## **2.2 "Leading Learning"**

According to the conclusion based on my research and seeking for the teacher's leadership, it is evident that focusing on the subject of values can create the appropriate change and affect the students in a real way. This does not refer to "teaching the values" but rather to a different world perception; a rationale that will lead to change of the teacher's behavior in the class and of the demands that the teacher sets for his students. Thus, the teacher is required to be aware of values, to develop a perception in which it is his role to behave these values (personal example), to develop them and to know in what ways he should act. The key to creating a change in the relations between teacher and students and in the teacher's ability to affect the students' learning directly passes through these values, and at their center – dialogue and personal authority, personal example, respect and recognition of the other. Teacher who will change their paradigm, their world perception and the ways in which they work will be able to become teacher-leaders and to develop additional generations of leaders. The atmosphere in school will be good, less violent and more respectful (Avinon, 2005). .

The learner's reflection is critical for the success of performing the task Feedback is one of the most central and important tools that exist in order to advance a student to improvement and success – brief, to-the-point, accurate and concrete feedback can affect the potential performance of learning.

## **2.3 Elements that Facilitate Effective Learning**

At the end of the seventies, breakthrough researchers in the field pointed at a possible relation between the school culture and the students' learning (Moos, 1979 in Opalkata, 2007, Cunningham & Hargreaves 2007, in Opalkata, 2007).

Researches of effective schools found that the educational staff expressed, both verbally and behaviorally, the belief that all the students can succeed, regardless of their social-economic status or their achievements in the past. At the same time, there

is a constant aspiration of the staff members to improve their own professionalism, through courses and workshops

**The self-image and the self-worth** are significantly affected by this experience of the student in his peer group and at the same time – by maintaining the student's uniqueness (Rocks & Schwartzold, 2000). A student who expresses himself in one peer group or another can satisfy both needs, and this will help his self-definition and reinforce his self-worth. With the improvement of the confidence and self-worth, school achievements will also improve.

My research supports the claim that the teacher's personality and behavior play a significant role in educating the future generation, those who ask questions that the students themselves are deliberating, who are willing and capable of changing both the content and the pattern of action in their search for meaning and who treat the students and their initiatives as work in process rather than as finished products – these students succeed too (Granon- Brooks & Brooks, 1997).

For the past two decades, the educational system in Israel is moving in an important general direction, which is particularly widespread in elementary schools and is gradually advancing towards the higher age groups. This direction is based on the idea of placing the learner at the center of the educational process- "Learner-centered education" (Tzabar-Ben-Yehoshua 2001) – and turning him into an independent learner. This condition constitutes an important theoretical-functional foundation, which is gradually becoming established in the vision of teachers and educators who believe in the importance of developing more suitable teaching-learning environments (Zilberstein, Ben-Peretz & Ziv, 1998). In recent years, many schools are focusing on developing environmental that promote self-regulation in learning and in teaching. The concept of "self-regulated learner" refers to the learner as someone who is capable of working alone or in a group; who recognizes his needs and his goals of personal growth; that plans and implements appropriate learning activities, and evaluates his progress in the course of the process (Skager, 1984). This challenge appears as a declared aim in many educational perceptions and institutional platforms, and is gaining recognition and implementation in some of the educational systems in Israel and in the world (Shield & Assouline, 1997).



In order to lead to the realization of this goal in practice, a systemic change is required, including professional development of all strata of the teaching staff – from the teachers, through the management and supervisions staff and including the policy shapers. Educators and researchers who address the issue of the training of teaching students and the planning of courses for practicing teachers have proposed diverse ways of doing so.

### **3 . Methodology – Qualitative and Quantitative Approach – Integrated Research Method**

This study is an integrated research methodology.

#### **3.1 The research hypotheses**

One of the goals of the present research was to examine how the teacher's functioning, personality and training (Kfir, 2009) affect the development of independent learners. According to this goal, the following hypotheses were examined:

1. There are relationships between teachers' personality and the way in which they support students in order to turn them into independent learners. The more the teacher's personality demonstrates enthusiasm; manifestations of interpersonal communication; patience; optimism; empathy; caring; sensitivity; personal treatment and self-confidence – the more the student's independent learning level increases, and vice versa.
2. There are relationships between teachers' behavior and the way in which they support students in order to turn them into independent learners. The more the teacher's behavior demonstrates manifestations of leadership that include sub-categories of challenging the learner, constant learning ability of the teacher, being knowledgeable in the material that he teaches, responsibility, respect, love of the learner, tranquility, assertiveness, providing a personal example, fairness, attentiveness and diligence – the more the student's independent learning level increases, and vice versa.
3. There are relationships between teachers' training and the way in which they support students in order to turn them into independent learners. The more the

teacher's training is high-leveled and diverse – the more the student's independent learning level increases, and vice versa.

### **3.2 The research goals**

The present research has several goals:

1. To investigate, understand and criticize the quality of teaching in order to improve the teacher's work so that he will be skilled and prepared for developing an independent, thinking and critical learner.
2. In order to attain this supreme goal, the present research set itself the goal of understanding, describing and focusing the characteristics of a teacher who develops an independent learner, in answer to the research questions.
3. To design and implement a curriculum and associated pedagogy in order to introduce, support and develop such skills in school students and in teaching students in teacher-training colleges.

The results of this study will add to the current literature the concept of developing, implementing and evaluating learning skills in school students and teaching students, which are the process and the effectiveness of developing thinking skills in school students and teaching students. In addition, creating quality learning outcomes by infusing critical thinking skills into course contents – through the use of cognitive activities that require students to analyse information and data, to pose questions, to construct arguments on the basis of well-founded knowledge, to express opinions and to make decisions. Such activities require both school students and college students to acquire new skills; to integrate them with existing knowledge; to give personal meaning to the material and so to construct their own meanings; and to transfer them to other contexts – professional or personal.

In addition, **this study strives to add knowledge about the use of evaluation tools for measuring and evaluating the process and the effectiveness of the development of students' independent learning skills**, by developing a research tool for this purpose. Moreover, this study will add to existing knowledge about the effect of the various student-focused teaching methods in class, through the use of various ways of learning.

### **3.3 The research questions**

The goal of the present research was to characterize the skills that are required of the future teacher, in order to affect his development processes and his adaptation to developing an independent learner. Through this goal, and on the basis of extensive reading of the relevant professional literature, the following research questions arose:

1. What are the personality characteristics of a teacher who develops independent learners?
2. What are the behavioural characteristic of a teacher who develops independent learners?
3. What are the training (and/or support) characteristics of of a teacher who develops independent learners?
4. What are the characteristics of an independent learner?

### **3.4 The Research Stages**

The literature review, and identifying the complexity of the definition of "independent learning" and thus the complexity of training an independent learner, affected the stages of the present research.

Through the literature it was difficult to learn about measurement and evaluation, as well as about the profile of a teacher who develops independent learners. Thus, this study made use of an integrated approach of qualitative and quantitative research. As aforesaid, the fact that the topic of independent learning in general and that of the independent learner in particular is relatively new, and that there are various different definitions of the term "independent learning", as could be seen in the previous

section (the Literature Review), led the researcher to certain decisions in relation to the research approach.

Only after collecting the information from the field and analyzing it did the second part of the research begin – developing a quantitative research tool for measuring variables that were found to be relevant in the qualitative field study, and collecting data from the field of education (teachers and students who will become teachers). Thus, use was made of two different tools: from the qualitative approach we used interviews with various informants – parents, teachers, students, supervisors and principals. From the quantitative approach we used a questionnaire in order to measure the perceptions of teachers (including teaching students) regarding the abilities that are required in order to develop an independent learner, as well as their positions regarding their own ability to develop such a learner.

The following sections will present these two research methods, as they are implemented in this research.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	Identifying a problem
2	Conducting initial interviews with teachers
3	Analysis of the interviews and decisions about shaping the following interviews.
4	Interviews with teachers, principals, supervisors, parents and students.
5	Additional interview with two interviewees
6	Analysis of the descriptive findings
7	Developing a questionnaire for measuring the research variables – Pilot Research
8	Collecting quantitative data from two groups of participants
9	Analysis of the quantitative findings
8	Discussion and analysis of the findings (qualitative and quantitative).

To make recommendations based on this evaluation for effective pedagogical strategies to develop and extend independent learning in school students and teaching students in teacher-training colleges.

**4. Findings - Table no. 4 – Concentration of the personality-behavioral characteristics of a teacher who develops independent learners**

Category	Teachers (22)	Principals (5)	Supervisors (3)	Parents (9)	Students (11)	Total
<b>Love of the Learner (107)</b>						
Patience	(14) 64%	(1) 20%	(3) 100%	(7) 78%	(9) 82%	34
Calm	(4) 20%	(1) 20%	(2) 66%	(9) 100%	(9) 82%	27
Love of the learner	(9) 40%	(1) 20%	(3) 100%	(6) 67%	(6) 55%	25
Respect	(4) 20%	(1) 20%	(1) 33%	(2) 22%	----	8
Caring and sensitivity	----	(1) 20%	(1) 33%	(5) 55%	(1) 9%	8
Enthusiasm	(3) 14%	----	----	----	----	3
Optimism	(1) 5%	----	----	(1) 11%	----	2
<b>Leadership (101)</b>						
Attentiveness	(5) 25%	(1) 20%	(2) 67%	(8) 87%	(10) 91%	22
Leadership	(9) 40%	(4) 80%	(3) 100%	(1) 11%	----	17
Interpersonal communication	(4) 18%	(3) 60%	(2) 67%	(8) 87%	----	17
Responsibility	(4) 20%	(1) 20%	----	(9) 100%	----	14
Personal treatment	(2) 10%	----	(2) 67%	(3) 33%	(6) 55%	13
Assertiveness	(5) 25%	----	----	(2) 25%	----	7
Openness and flexibility	(4) 20%	----	(1) 33%	----	----	5
Personal example	(1) 5%	(3) 60%	----	(1) 11%	----	5
Self-confidence	(3) 14%	(1) 20%	----	----	----	4
Fair	(1) 5%	----	----	(1) 11%	----	2
<b>Love of the profession (57)</b>						

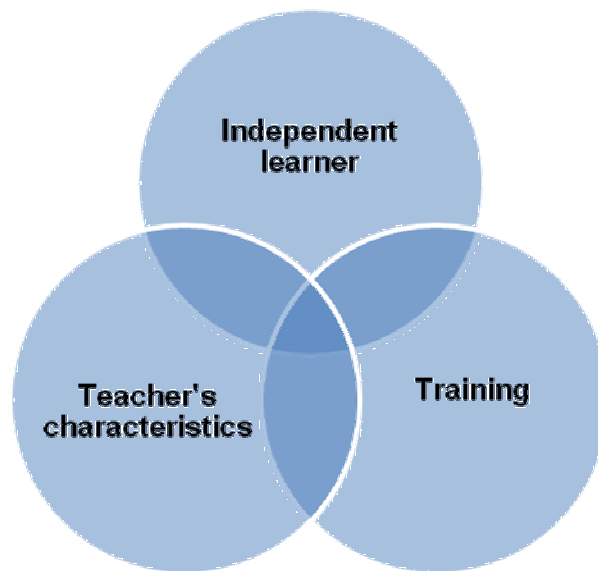
Knowledgeable	(7) 30%	(3) 60%	(3) 100%	(5) 55%	(9) 82%	27
Learning ability	(9) 40%	(4) 80%	(3) 100%	----	----	16
Diligence	(4) 20%	(2) 40%	----	----	----	6
Challenging	(2) 10%	(1) 20%	(1) 33%	----	----	4
Love of the profession	(2) 10%	(1) 20%	----	(1)10%	----	4

Personality and behavioral characteristics			Training characteristics	Independent learner
			l_Pedagogical training	l_Atains knowledge for himself
<b>Love of the learner</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Love of the profession</b>	l_Professional training	l_Responsible for his learning
l_Patience	l_Attentiveness	l_Knowledgeable		l_Investigates, learns through interest
l_Calm	l_Communication	l_Learning ability		l_Learns through Choice
l_Respect	l_Responsibility	l_Diligence		l_Askes questions
l_Enthusiasm	l_Personal Treatment	l_Challenging		l_Solves problems by himself
l_Optimism	l_Assertiveness			l_Has intrinsic Motivation
	l_Personal Example			l_Has high thinking Levels
	l_Openness			l_Requires minimal Mediation
	l_Self-confidence			l_Capable of coping by himself with adapted material
	l_Fairness			

#### 4.1 Discussion

Three supreme categories were shaped in the present research as key components for developing an independent learner:

1. Teacher's characteristics – personality and behavior – that reflect the teacher who develops "independent learners".
2. Relevant training characteristics for developing "independent learners".
3. Characteristics of the student as an "independent learner".



### 5.1 Contribution of the present research

The contribution of the present research is in several aspects:

**Implementation contribution:** This is the first research of its kind to encompass three environments that constitute the field of education:

1. Teacher training institutes – **The present research derived its data from teachers, principals and supervisors who are the representatives and graduates of teacher-training institutes in Israel** (participants of the qualitative research), as well as experienced teachers and teaching students (participants of the quantitative research). The received information can contribute to form and upgrade learning materials on the one hand and on the other hand to reshape the learning products that aim to develop independent learners.
2. The findings that arose in the present research (the combination of the qualitative and quantitative findings) indicate a need to update the curriculums and the training programs, so that they will provide solutions for the complexity of the process of developing independent learners.
3. The present research raised evidence regarding the gaps that teachers experience in skills and training that are suitable for developing independent learners, both on the primary level and on the ongoing level. The gaps can be explained through the information that was received in the interviews – professional training and pedagogical training that will enable educational leadership for accompanying the process of developing independent learners.
4. **The research findings indicate that the more the teacher himself is equipped with the skills of an independent learner, the more he is successful in developing independent learning in his students.** This finding

supports the need to shape a teacher and train him with the best of tools and abilities, so that he will constitute a role model for his students, and will lead them to success.

**Contribution to the academic knowledge: As aforesaid, this is the first research of its kind to encompass three environments that constitute the field of education – the teacher, the student and the training institute.**

The research goal was to study, investigate and understand the teaching environment that develops independent learning. For this purpose, the researcher developed the research design in stages, through the use of an integrated qualitative and quantitative research methodology.

The strength of the research is on two planes:

**The methodological plane** – The research was constructed in stages, beginning with collecting qualitative information from the field, whose concepts were found to be vague, unclear to the extent of being unknown. In other words, the findings from the research field indicated complete vagueness regarding the subject of independent learning. At the end of the first stage and based on extensive reading of professional literature, the researcher moved to the second stage of the research, **developing a quantitative research tool.**

The disagreements and lack of clarity that were found in the literature, as well as the vague findings in the research field, raised the need to clarify and focus the research on three central areas.

Thus, the additional strength of the research is in the **holistic vision** of the act of education, in which three central "players" participate:

The teacher-training institute, which constitutes the catalyst for the process, directing inputs and resources and deciding on the learning materials and the training goals.

The teachers – who carry out their work and their mission in educating, training and preparing the future generation for citizenship tasks as useful and contributing citizens.

The student – The crowning glory – the product of the educational system, on which the future leadership of the country and its citizens is based.



Through the integrated methodology, the researcher succeeded in hearing the voices of diverse stakeholders, thus enabling her to construct the puzzle of the educational work, with all of its interfaces.

In addition, the use of the integrated methodology enabled the researcher to crosscheck information regarding the investment in developing the teacher and the students' chances to develop as an independent learner.

## **5.2 Recommendations for future research**

It is recommended to conduct a research that includes intervention – developing independent learning after appropriate training of the teachers, measuring and evaluating the development process of independent in the course of one school year. Within this framework, it will be possible to make use of the research tool that was developed in the present research, for the purpose of interviews and observations in the classroom.

1. To conduct a comparative study in developed and developing countries and to examine the standards those accompany independent learning beyond the State of Israel.
2. To examine the suitability of the method for shaping independent learners in the field of special education.
3. To develop a curriculum that is based on the principles of the model, and to follow its implementation with an action research.

## **5.3 In the implementation aspect**

It is required to develop a work kit for the student, accompanied by a guidebook for the teacher, both of which are based on the principles of the model for developing independent learners. It is recommended that the kit be age-adapted, as well as adapted for learning -challenged students, for students who have been diagnosed as gifted, for college students as well as for the parents who accompany their children's learning process. Through this kit, they can be involved in the process and contribute to its success.

#### **5.4 The research's contribution to the researcher's professional development**

In a reflective view, I came to the research field with very little experience, and gained experience and empowered my skills, both in qualitative research and in quantitative research.

The present research provided I with an opportunity to develop a qualitative research tool 'DILI' - an interview - through which she acquired skills both on the level of designing the interview and on the level of developing abilities as an interviewer, which certainly contributed to the future professional aspect both as a teachers' instructor and as a researcher in the field of education.

Before analyzing the data, I encountered difficulties in enlisting the participants' cooperation. I sought to understand the factors that blocked their cooperation and appealed personally to most of the participants, in order to understand what the lack of cooperation stems from. The replies that I received from the principals and supervisors indicated that their lack of cooperation stemmed from the time or attention that the participant had to invest. According to this group of participants, they are short on the time resource and thus find it difficult to invest the required attention and to provide answers to the questions that were asked through the research tool.

This experience also contributed to strengthening and shaping me and to developing my leadership skills, through which I succeeded in enlisting and interviewing 50 interviewees.

An additional opportunity was provided for me in developing the quantitative questionnaire. This process was accompanied by extensive research of theoretical materials, indicating - as aforesaid - that the professional literature itself is divided on the definition, characteristics and components of the subject of the present research - independent learning in general and the independent learner in particular.

Experiencing the development of a research tool required ability for critical thinking, asking questions, analysis, synthesis and an integrative ability to include the diverse aspects that the research addressed.

The present research contributed to the development of personal skills such as: reading and critical evaluation of materials in the professional literature, aspects of time management and of dividing other resources between the researcher's various roles as a mother, wife, friend, teacher, instructor, etc.

The present research will contribute to the personal and professional development of the researcher, who intends to train teaching students as well as to go on guiding teachers and educators or educational teams and to develop their personal and professional skills so that they will constitute a model for the future generation in how to nurture independent learners and to take responsibility for "creating" school/college students who are suitable for functioning professionally in the 21st century.

In the professional and personal aspect, developing herself will enable the researcher to be an independent person who makes decisions and develops her career as a coacher in the field of education (both professionally and personally).

### **5.5 Reflection**

I experienced development of the research tool after reading extensive and diverse theoretical material and using critical thinking in asking the questions and in an attempt to include the diverse aspects that my research addresses.

Before analyzing the data, I encountered difficulties in enlisting the participants' cooperation. I sought to understand the factors that blocked their cooperation and appealed personally to most of the participants, in order to understand what the lack of cooperation stems from. The replies that I received from the principals and supervisors indicated that their lack of cooperation stemmed from the time or attention that the participant had to invest. According to this group of participants, they are short on the time resource and thus find it difficult to invest the required attention and to provide answers to the questions that were asked through the research tool.

Through the experience and by studying the participants' difficulties, and through the initial data processing, I developed the research tool in the following way: Following the number of questions that arose in the questionnaire/open interview, a decision was

made to shorten the number of questions, through commitment to focus on the principal questions that are most relevant to the examined subject, with attention to the following aspects: personality-behavioral and training.

In addition I identified that question that began with the words "Do you" received brief, laconic answers (mainly yes or no). Thus, I created a change particularly in the questionnaire for the teacher, principals and supervisors, beginning the questions with the words "How?" "What?" etc. (Shkedi, 2003).

This paper will provide answers to the question: Why should we train an independent learner? Several answers can be found to this question:

1. The explosion of information.
2. The centrality of the student – no ownership of the knowledge by the teacher.
3. The information's accessibility to the student.
4. The student's exposure to unregulated information.
5. Integration in a competitive and demanding work world that requires decision-making and problem-solving skills.
6. A citizen who contributes to the community.
7. A person with values – behavioral and social norms and integrity.

### **Summary**

In a time in which the great challenge of education is to establish schools in which the students will direct their own learning, the learners' attention is directed not only to acquiring knowledge in various disciplines, but also to understanding their own work habits and the value systems that motivate them, to becoming acquainted with their own expectations, skills and abilities in particularly to understanding the best way in which they learn" (Areglado, Bradley & Leane, 1996). The post modern social approach strives to integrations of body and mind, subjective and objective, teacher-student, and gives a significant place not only to the products, but also to the process.

In autonomous elementary schools, schools that are involved in the active learning project, as well as in some high schools, nurturing a self-regulated learning is a central educational goal. Use of clear measures that will serve as evidence of the realization

of the desired idea will help the followers of the idea of nurturing a self-regulated learner to present their arguments in the public discourse, in a place in which "measuring achievements", "clear evidence", "efficient teaching", "efficient school", etc. are the acceptable currency.

The education system, which has placed the attaining of a matriculation diploma as the goal to which all students should be brought according to the traditional paradigm (Dovrat Committee Report, 2005), does not pay sufficient attention to the students' variance and does not adapt itself to their abilities, needs and skills.

Today, the teacher's work involves handling growing difficulties in the work with the students, such as difficulty in setting boundaries - setting rules and regulations and enforcing them; loss of control; hesitation in using authority and frustration in light of the lack of success in leading the students to the expected success (Weiss, 2010; Kreindler & Weiss, 2008).

Although contemporary research findings show that the customary teaching methods do not lead the students to the desirable achievement (Kfir, 2008), and are usually aimed at the silent majority in a class with mediocre achievements, they are still the main stream procedure in the education system. The teaching methods that are commonly used today focus on summarizing rather than on shaping, they do not provide the students with opportunities to improve their achievements, to think critically and to develop learners with self-learning orientation (Harpaz, 2000, in Paldi, 2002).

When a teacher sets out, he is expected to handle implementation pedagogical situations, to implement theories that he has learnt and to initiate change. However, this is often shoved aside and the teacher begins to adapt himself qualities that are considered by the system as positive and desirable, with the emphasis on "**what should be done**". In the teacher's attempt to survive, he gives up the effort to create a change and to express his uniqueness.

Consequently, teachers feel frustrated in light of the gap between the existing and the desirable in their work (Yoad, 2004).

The concept of **self-direction** is anchored in various socio-psychological schools (Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994, in Emanuel, 2003). These schools are mainly based on the recognition that through the implementation of cognitive, meta-cognitive and motivational functions in the course of learning, it is possible to lead the learner's consciousness to recognize the goals of his learning; to develop action strategies for attaining his goals; and to increase his willingness to evaluate and produce feedback - all this in order to improve his personal progress and his learning achievements (Butler & Winne, 1995).

Even though the changes, the education system continues the traditional methods.

The new curriculum and standards (Koster & Dengerink, 2008) that have been introduced into the educational system in Israel emphasize the need to develop the learner's self-regulation abilities in the learning process, and the need for his active participation in order to develop his thinking and his ability to produce meaning from this process. Self-observation, self-judgment and self-response may lead to greater success in the learning process and may even increase the student's motivational aspects. Most theoreticians' think that the self-regulation in learning ability develops in the years of elementary school, and that a great deal of time and effort has to be devoted in order to make it attractive to the learner. Cognitive learning strategies, meta-cognitive learning strategies, resource management strategies and alongside them motivational orientations are components of the "self direction in learning" structure. Developing self-regulation abilities in learning are becoming a prerequisite for every teacher and learner, and even appear in the CEO Circular of the Israeli Ministry of Education and in the official curriculums (Yoad, 2004).

As the discourse on the subject of the reformation in education is escalating, with the students' success in the educational system and the extent to which they and their parents are satisfied with this system being more and more related to good teaching and to a teacher who knows his work well and performs it faithfully, the demand to train such teachers is increasing. An argument is being made that teachers should learn skills of self-regulation in learning deeply, experience them and embrace them as adult learners, in order to lead the students to optimal control and ability and to develop them as self-regulated learners (Dovrat Committee Report, 2005). At the same time, educational researchers are seeking to expand the body of knowledge on good teaching. One of the ways of attaining such knowledge is by researching good

teachers who know their work well and know how to lead the students to maximal use of their abilities, by learning how to learn independently. This way will enable the researchers to locate and characterize the various components of good teaching, which other teachers can learn in order to improve their teaching.

Teaching affects the society in which we live. The quality of the teaching force will determine whether a school will succeed or fail in training its students to life in the postmodern era (Kfir, 2009). Whereas the perception of teaching that was customary in the past regarded a good teacher as possessing efficient techniques for imparting pre-determined knowledge and skills to the learners, research in the past decade has indicated a completely different ideal. Today, a good teacher promotes efficient communication with his students, manifested in clear and organized teaching, and is capable of creating a learning-promoting atmosphere in class, while demonstrating caring towards the students and their learning. At the same time, a teacher who trains his students to independent life, in which they can cope by themselves with the tasks that are assigned to them, can feel that he is fulfilling his designation. This is a teacher who teaches his students how to learn - who provides them with the tools that are required for learning rather than "feed" them with the learning materials.

. In order to perceive the phenomenon of good teaching in its entirety, as it appears in reality, the focus of the research was on five target groups. The first group is the students themselves - who constitute the "client". Surrounding them are 4 additional groups of adults who are responsible for their education. The groups that were chosen for the purpose of the present research are the parents, the teachers, the principals and the supervisors, and the present research belongs to the integrated research paradigm - qualitative and quantitative research. This will serve as the basis for the creation of a theory on good teaching, which is relevant to different schools.

The subject of good teaching also appears in the public discourse today, following the conclusions of the Israeli "National Taskforce" (Dovrat Committee Report, 2005). The committee's conclusions include an examination of ways in which to reward teachers for excellence, as well as to integrate an excellence component in the salary. The report places emphasis on the quality of teaching, and proposes that the standards for accepting new teachers to work should be raised. Improving the teaching level will

help to promote the teacher's status in society, and will contribute to his empowerment within the school itself (Alony, 2003). Every teacher should aspire to improve and to advance his teaching skills. A research paper on the subject of the teaching behaviors of a good teacher that is based on the qualitative paradigm also enables the teacher's evaluators (principals, supervisors) to embrace a more holistic approach of examining the teacher's work according to the measures that were found in this research and others. The theoretical categories that are provided by researchers of education help us to identify the qualities that make an educator "good", and distinguish between him and other educators (Leibowitz, 2005).

Many studies have been conducted on the subject of the good teacher (Hativa, 2003). Some are based on choosing teachers who were identified as good using various methods, asking the question: What makes them good teachers? This research has embraced this method. In order to add to the body of knowledge that exists on the subject of good teaching in order to serve researchers, teaching evaluators and educators in their work, an attempt will be made in this paper to investigate what are the desirable personality-behavioral qualities of a teacher who develops independent learners, in the eyes of the various examined groups (teachers, principals, supervisors, parents and students).

. Locating potential for success (identify characteristics, qualities and skills) lies in their abilities and their suitability for the educational system (Alony, 2003; Asor& Kaplan, 2001; Harpaz, 2000).



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