

Bar-Ilan University

**The image of the significant teacher
as it is perceived by high school
female religious adolescent**

Bareket Hannah Revivo

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master's Degree
in the School of Education, Bar- Ilan University**

Ramat- Gan, Israel

August, 2017

Abstract

The primary objective of this study was to profile the characteristics of the teacher perceived as significant by religious teenage girls. This goal derived from the understanding of the great importance of a significant figure in the lives of youth, one who manages to touch the soul of his pupils and who has an impact beyond merely imparting knowledge and skills. In addition, the significant teacher figure, can constitute a stable emotional anchor and markedly contribute to personality shaping, identity and choices made by youth, particularly during adolescence. The characteristics of the significant teacher figure in the present study, were assessed in relation to three elements: (1) the significant teacher's meta-qualities - the teacher's personality versus professionalism; (2) secondary qualities within the meta-qualities, e.g., personality traits and teaching methods and (3) features within the secondary qualities, e.g., fairness and encouraging excellence. The study was conducted on a sample of teenage girls in religious schools. Three questions were examined in this study: (1) Can a profile of characteristics and qualities of the "significant teacher" figure be sketched?; (2) What are the most important characteristics and qualities of the significant teacher?; (3) Are there differences between teenage girls from different religious streams and different age groups in their perception of the significant teacher figure?

The study questionnaires were presented to a sample of 295 high school students from six public religious schools, from three different religious sectors: two Ultra-orthodox schools (35% of the sample), three traditional schools (31% of the sample) and one national religious school (36% of the sample). Within each school, three grades were sampled (10-12). The students were given a research questionnaire to assess the significant teacher figure. In addition, 39 students were interviewed in semi-structured interviews.

Both quantitative and qualitative data measurement methods were used in parallel. Comparison of the characteristics of the significant teacher described in the literature, with those of authentic images from the field can contribute to realization of the characteristics of the significant teacher, thereby contributing to the validity of the measurement. The quantitative data were collected using a closed questionnaire, in which different teacher characteristics collected from the literature were presented

and ranked, using a 5-point Likert scale, according to their perceived importance in the significant teacher figure. In the qualitative part, data were collected through a semi-structured interview, during which, the students were asked three open questions.

The findings of the study show that teenage girls in religious schools perceive the significant teacher as a teacher with clear and unique personality traits. A significant teacher is a teacher who emphasizes the importance of a teacher-student relationship, provides emotional support, maintains a positive classroom atmosphere and, in parallel, encourages motivation for learning. In addition, it was found that the significant teacher combines personal qualities with professional qualities. Thus, it seems that the significant teacher, who influences the identity and the choices of religious teenage girls, is perceived as a teacher with humanistic characteristics, who assists his students, provides emotional support and fosters a warm and humane personal connection with his students, and at the same time, sets clear boundaries and oversees realization of their scholastic abilities. A summary of the quantitative and qualitative findings of the present study enables us to propose a valid definition of the significant teacher figure among religious teenagers, as well as to map the most important characteristics of the figure. The findings of this research contribute to the understanding that it is very important for a teacher to combine personal and professional aspects of his work to become a significant teacher who succeeds in "touching the soul" of his students and influencing them beyond merely imparting knowledge and skills. An influence that touches on the student's inner layers and relates to aspects of shaping the student's personality, identity and outlook, both in the short and long term. Awareness of the profile of the significant teacher figure is of great importance in teacher training and as an acceptance criterion for the teaching profession, and it can also contribute to improving the quality of the teacher's work.