

**BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY**

**The Process of Personal Development  
as a Pedagogical Tool for the Teacher as an  
Educator in the Ways of “Meaningful Learning” in  
Israel –  
a Theoretical Study**

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## Abstract

This work which presents a theoretical research foundation, discusses the importance of cultivating the teacher as a student of meaningful learning, and seeks to view this cultivation as an inseparable part of his or her professional training in teaching methods guided by the educational reform “Israel advances the educational level – the national program for meaningful learning.” This reform, intended for systemic implementation, was officially launched in early 2014 following the recognition of the need to adapt school teaching methods to the changing age of the twenty-first century. The main goal of the program’s initiators was to establish, within the school learning process, practical based theory foundations that develop lifelong learning skills in the student, which are required, especially now in the current era more than ever before; a learning process that calls for an emotional, social, and cognitive experience that has relevance in the student’s life, and is thus experienced as a meaningful one. According to this approach, the teacher has an essential role in leading this pedagogical change.

This study, which discusses the professional training required by the teacher as a changer-leader for the reform at hand, focuses on the pedagogical aspect. Therefore, the main theme here is to cultivate and expand the teacher’s meaningful learning process as a process of personal change and development in order to empower his or her pedagogical abilities, as well as to strengthen teachers’ pragmatic teaching methods that promote “meaningful learning.” The thesis discusses two main issues and is thus divided into two chapters:

The first presents the educational approach to “meaningful learning” and focuses on two topics:

a. The theoretical rationale underlying the initiative for this educational reform, and the principles of teaching methods derived from it. The research is based on theoretical sources in the fields of philosophy, cognitive, educational, and humanistic psychology.

b. Based on these principles, the teacher’s role as a potential meaningful adult figure for the student is explored.

With regards to the principles that forms the “meaningful learning” approach, and the

role of the teacher as a potential meaningful adult figure for the student, the second chapter discusses ways to develop and cultivate teacher's personal development skills in order to implement their efficacy as meaningful adult figures for the student, by practicing these teaching manners in every day work.

These transformational skills are analyzed according to four main personal development aspects: The aspect of flexibility and its physiological expression in the human brain; the individuation aspect; the aspect of emotional intelligence; and the spirit of adventure and research. Each aspect is characterized by its main components alongside with the teaching principle's nature in the manner of meaningful learning. The methodological choice to present each aspect of transformation separately does not result from a conceptual rationale, and in a sense even violates the nature of the process of personal development, which by its very definition as a process is not bound to the categories that defines it, and is therefore dynamic and emergent. Yet, by means of this methodological separation, the theoretical linear structure of the study is revealed alongside of the network of connections that extends from it and expands it as one whole set, which illustrates the dynamism of the process of change.

The conclusions to this study, which are supported by theoretical research, reinforce the idea to invest in the teacher's training as meaning learners in order for them to educate students accordingly. In this way, the present work constitutes a theoretical platform for further research that will examine the pragmatic implementation of the theme in the field of teaching, whether among young students or teaching trainees.