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**Teachers with Learning Disabilities: Identifying the Professional Self by Analysing the Autobiographic Story and the Reflective Feedback on Practice**

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# Teachers with Learning Disabilities

## Identifying the Professional Self by Analysing the

## Autobiographic Story and the

## Reflective Feedback on practice

submitted by Hanna Bar-Tikva

University of Bath

2008

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**Abstract**

This research examined the stories of three teachers with learning disabilities at the inception of their teaching careers. The research explored the composition of the teacher's professional knowledge, described in the literature as consisting of academic knowledge and personal knowledge. Would the teacher with learning disabilities express her painful childhood school memories in her present-day professional deliberations, as is indicated in the literature relating to case descriptions and research studies? The research question was: what does the 'personal self' of the teacher with learning disabilities at the inception of her career contribute to her 'professional self'? Assisted by the narrative approach that sees a person as creating stories that structure and express his identity, the teachers' stories were collected, recorded and later analysed by interpretative analysis which related to the story's structure and contents. Research data were collected from three sources: the autobiographical story of the teacher presenting personal memories and interpretation for past life events, which illustrate the teacher's inter-personal self and the intra-personal self. The teacher's reflective feedback regarding her lessons, presented the teacher's interpretations of her professional considerations and a description of an educational event from her work revealed her educative-value world. All these demonstrated her professional knowledge. The research findings show that coherence exists between the personal story and the professional story and the organising positioning in each of the teacher's stories was identified. It was found that the professional considerations of the teacher, including didactic knowledge, pedagogic knowledge, use of reasoned rules and reading the class map, acted on a background of knowledge that was gathered from the 'personal self' and this enriched the teacher's 'professional self' at the inception of her career.

**Preface**

In my work as a lecturer and pedagogic mentor, in the special education stream of a teacher training college, a subject that stands permanently on the agenda is the subject of integration. We train new teachers to understand the theory, values, research and practice of integration of children with special needs in regular classes. Over the years more and more special education pupils have been integrated, to different degrees, within regular classes, beginning with early childhood and up to the end of secondary school. Teachers learn how to introduce these pupils into academic and social areas of class life, and it seems that despite the resistance and difficulties that teachers encounter here and there, the concept has become imprinted in the education system. Alongside this process, there has been growing awareness of the needs of pupils with learning disabilities who in the past 'dropped out' of the theoretical learning systems because of what then appeared to be the lack of suitability of the pupils to the system because of a background of low achievements and functional and integration difficulties. The concept that it was possible to adapt the educational system to the needs of the pupils gave birth to a system of modifications for pupils with learning difficulties and enabled many LD[1] pupils to complete high school with a matriculation certificate. The continuation of this process is the creation of conditions, meaning a system of supports and modifications in the higher education settings, both colleges and universities, in order to uphold the right of people with disabilities to acquire an academic degree and to join the labour market.

But, can people with learning disabilities become teachers? I asked myself this question when I mentored students who explained the different difficulties they encounter because of their learning disability. One of the unwritten but very important conditions to help people with LD to find a satisfactory place in the academic world is that their lecturers' attitudes towards them should be supportive. I investigated the attitudes of lecturers in a teacher training college with regard to the integration of students with learning disabilities and in relation to the possibility that these students would, in the future, become teachers (Bar-Tikva, 2002). The research finding gs showed a predominant willingness of most of the lecturers to adapt their teaching

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[1] LD – Learning Disabilities

methods and to modify their methods of student assessment. Most of the lecturers reported that they knew a person with learning disabilities personally and as a college graduate he could and would be entitled to become a teacher, despite the learning disability, on the condition that he was able to write without mistakes. These findings demonstrated that the concept of integration was not rejected out of hand, but had seeped into the public of lecturers who signified their willingness (at a declarative level) to assist students with learning disabilities.

As a counsellor and psychotherapist, I listen to people's stories.  A personal story embodies an infinite wealth of the narrator's past memories, wishes, disappointments, desires and aspirations together with the unique coping mechanisms that the narrator uses in the present. These make him become who he is in his own eyes and in the eyes of those around him. I am very interested in the encounter between the personal story, i.e. the inter-personal and intra-personal world of the teacher-narrator, and his professional world. Do the teachers' explanations of their professional paths provide hints regarding personal memories and internalisations connected with early personal learning?  And what happens to that special connection when the teachers begin their work career? They have almost no accessible work experience and those life experiences are experiences of pupils with learning disabilities.  Intrigued by these three fields, the personal, professional and disability fields and the relations between them, I formed my present research, with the assistance of research literature. The research goal was to get to know the internal self of the teacher, from the autobiographical story, to become acquainted with the teacher's professional world from the reflective feedback on her lessons and to identify connections between the personal and the professional.  Did the professional considerations of the teacher also rely on the teacher's 'personal-knowledge' whether the teacher was conscious of it or not? Did the teacher's personal memories of herself as a child with learning disabilities in the education system 'equip' her with personal knowledge that nourished her professional knowledge?  This research attempts to answer these questions. The Introduction will present a general description of the methodology used in the research.

# 1. Introduction

This research discusses the stories of three teachers with learning disabilities, at the beginning of their teaching careers. I have studied three teachers: Tamar, Noa, and Mira[2]. All three of them completed studies for a B.Ed. degree in Education and are certified teachers.

Tamar—is 27 years old and a teacher in the sciences teaches at an elementary school mathematics and science to pupils in grades 4-6 and is in her second year.

Noa— is 28 years old and a special education teacher has taught a regular second grade class and now teaches in a kindergarten (ages 5-6) with special education pupils integrated into the class.

Mira—is 29 years old and a special education teacher teaches in a special education school for pupils with mental retardation who live in an institution, they are aged 14-16.

In order to get to know their professional selves, it is necessary to study and acknowledge two elements that are liable to teach us something about the teacher's professionalism. The first element is the teacher's autobiographical story, as she chooses to tell it. The second element is the reflective feedback of the teacher regarding her lesson and educational events in her work. The research data and findings are based on the narrative approach, and I shall therefore present some of the basic assumptions of this approach in the introduction.

The narrative technique is a research approach that observes life as it appears in narratives and tries to understand the personal-practical knowledge of the teachers through their stories which describe their practical experiences and the significance that they attribute to this experience. Many dimensions of the narrator's thinking are revealed in the story and they can be used to examine the interactions that practical teaching experience affords (Elbaz 1991). The distinction that was drawn in the past between theoretical research and the life and practical experience of the teachers left the 'practical knowledge' (Elbaz-Luwisch 2001) and the 'personal-practical knowledge' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) of the teacher outside the picture. In contrast to studies that focused on questions regarding what is known about effective

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[2] Pseudonyms are used to refer to participants through this study.

teaching, or what knowledge is essential for teaching, the narrative approach considers what teachers know as a result of their experience and who actually creates knowledge concerning teaching (Fenstermacher, 1994). Is it the teachers who create knowledge or do they just transmit knowledge that is created by researchers?

Practical knowledge is defined as the total sum of all the meanings that teachers attribute to their teaching behaviours and the personal ways in which they interpret the world in which they live (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). The range of meanings is wide and is influenced by feelings, beliefs, values and personal knowledge that are consolidated and formed through the individual's experiences (Sabar-Ben Yehoshua, 2001). Since personal experiences may influence the teacher's teaching behaviours it is important to understand practical experience as a source of personal knowledge (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). The phrase 'personal-practical knowledge' represents the teacher's knowledge of the class, knowledge that is anchored in his past experience, in the present where he acts and in his plans for the future (Kupferberg and Gilat, 2000). This knowledge has a personal history and it is perceived as carrying a baggage of emotions, values and beliefs and it has both a cognitive pan and an affective pan (Connolly and Clandinin, 1988; Fenstermacher, 1994). This knowledge links childhood memories, our experiences as pupils and our experiences as teachers or as teacher trainers.

The interest in biographies and autobiographies of teachers (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001; Ben-Peretz, 2001; Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2001) has its origins in the understanding that personal knowledge, that is drawn from personal history is 'replicated' in the (present) considerations of the teachers when they cope with different teaching situations (Butt and Raymond, 1988; Kupferberg and Gilat, 2000). There are those who define a 'narrative' as a story told about past events, whose telling is a universal human activity (Riessman, 1993) and there are those who claim that a narrative is the principal means through which human experience is made significant (Polkinghorne, 1988). Connelly and Clandinin (1988) define a narrative as an opportunity to learn the meanings that people attribute to their experiences through the incessant telling and retelling of stories about themselves, stories that describe and illustrate their past and their goals for the future. Thus, the narrative appears to relate to three dimensions:

past, present and future, and contains the personal history of the teacher, his importance and his feelings in the present and his intended activities in the future.

The narrative as a research method exposes the inner world of teachers through the stories that they themselves tell about their experiences, and attempts to derive new meanings through the educational-discourse regarding these stories. The use of narratives is not limited to the field of education, and it is prevalent in research and teaching in disciplines such as: law, psychology, social work, literature, history, anthropology etc. Previous research (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Kupferberg and Gilat, 2000; Pritzker, 2000; Sabar-Ben Yehoshua, 2001; Kupferberg and Green, 2001; Ben-Peretz, 2001; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001 and others) shows that teachers use experiences remembered from childhood when they cope with educational situations in their classes. Often past experiences stand in opposition to theoretical knowledge that the teacher has acquired and believes in, and yet nevertheless the teachers choose to prefer the knowledge that they draw from their personal history. For example, a teacher has difficulty complying with the requirement established by the teaching staff: not to allow pupils to leave the class during the lesson, because this causes noisy disturbances to other classes. When a pupil asks to go to the toilets, the teacher remembers that when she was a pupil, she 'burst inside' because she was not allowed to leave the classroom before the end of the lesson. Therefore, she allows the pupil to leave the lesson 'in opposition' to her beliefs-knowledge that she should comply with the teaching staff's decisions (Kupferberg and Green, 2001, p. 157).

The present research relates to a population with unique characteristics, teachers with learning disabilities, which are described by the research literature (Einat, 2001; Wertheim, Vogel and Fresko, 2004, Ferri, 2001 and others) as a population with past schooldays experiences filled with pain and even humiliation. Almost certainly, the three teachers' autobiographic stories testify to this. However, is there evidence that their present professional considerations are also influenced by those same past experiences as pupils with learning disabilities?

The Literature Survey deals with the integration of LD students within higher education as a result of the "Education of the Handicapped Law" (USA, 1975). It also

describes the difficulties of LD students, supportive educational frameworks and the students' achievements.

Although the present research focuses on the stage after college studies, at the beginning of a professional career, I find it important to present the stage during which the teachers trained to become teachers. Assisted by the literature survey regarding these issues the reader is better able to understand the teachers' stories which describe the processes that they underwent. In addition the literature survey presents a summary of the narrative approach as a technique to investigate the teacher's professional development. This approach formed the basis for the research data analysis and their transformation into research findings.

The Methodology chapter includes presentation of the case study method and a description of the methods for narrative analysis. It also relates to the research questions, the research population, the research stages and the research tools. The Findings chapter opens with an introduction providing a detailed explanation for the presentation of the findings as three separate case studies. The interpretative analysis of the narratives makes it difficult to set a clear-cut meaningful borderline to distinguish the presentation of the finding from the discussion relating to this finding. In the Discussion chapter I discuss three subjects which emerged from the three teachers' stories: the question of identity – who am I really? coping with the results of a didactic diagnosis, and the empowerment experience.

The Conclusions derived from the research indicate that the teachers have rich professional knowledge: both academic professional knowledge and also personal-professional knowledge drawn from personal past experiences and the story of memories from different chapters in their lives. An organising figurative positioning was found that summarises the main motive interwoven in each narrative of each teacher: good order and correct organisation, creating a sense of confidence for Tamar as a child and as a teacher; in Noa's story, the teacher's love for the pupil is the source of the pupil's success as a child and as a teacher; while the figurative positioning in Mira's story emphasises knowing what the problem is and performing the requisite action.

In the next chapter, the 'Literature Review', I discuss aspects of the integration of people with learning disabilities within higher education, a process which today enables them to assimilate in professions that require academic education, such as teaching. In another part of the literature survey I present research studies that discuss narrative analysis, the professional development of the teachers from a narrative perspective, as it appears in the autobiographical story and in the positioning of the self in those stories.

## 2. Literature Review

In this chapter I will introduce the research literature concerning the inclusion of students with learning disabilities (SLD)[3] in higher education. In Israel, in the last decade, more and more teacher training colleges have admitted SLD (Bar-Tikva, 2002; Avissar, 2005, Vogel and Sharoni, 2006, Dahan, Lidor, and Meltsar, 2006) and provide special support centres for these students (Wertheim, Vogel and Fresko, 2004) based on a diagnosis of each student's special needs. As there is no legislation relating to the provision of study facilities for these students, it is important to explain the intrinsic factors that influence the functioning of students and particularly student teachers with learning disabilities.

I also will describe the context of the inquiry as it is represented in the literature from the narrative point of view, the autobiographical story as a means to learn about the professional development of teachers. Towards the end of this chapter I'll point to the discrepancies between the research literature and the overarching aims of my study.

### 2.1 Students with Learning Disabilities (SLD) in Higher Education

The notion of including students with learning disabilities in higher education has been researched in western countries and in Israel. Research between the years 1985-2000 was surveyed from the ERIC data-base by Mull, Sitlington and Alper (2001) on the subject of higher education for students with learning disabilities. They found many studies, from which they chose 26 articles which deal with the eleven factors which they identified as central to this subject of pupils with learning disabilities. The articles address the question of the definition of learning disability, the characteristics of the adult student, the type of institution, special entrance procedures, evaluation of services, programme of facilitations, support services, adaptation of the teaching, training and teaching of the staff, services for training the staff and evaluating programmes. This article deals with the integration of students from a legal point of view, the Rehabilitation Act, 1973(USA), the Education Act, 1975(USA) and especially Section 504 which obliges the universities and colleges to enable people

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[3] SLD – Students with Learning Disabilities

with disabilities to study in their institutions. They are to provide *"equal opportunity to gain the same result, to gain the same benefit or to reach the same level of achievement, in the most integrated setting appropriate to the person's needs"* (104.4(b)(2)). Section 504 mandated that *"no otherwise qualified handicapped individual . . . shall, solely by reason of his/her handicap, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination, under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance"* (Rehabilitation Act of 1973- USA). Higher education is a civil right and it is prohibited to prevent it and/or to create discrimination against people because of their handicap or disability. Following this legislation the percentage of students with learning disabilities rose from 1.2% per annum to 3.5% of the general student population who began their studies in 1998.

The research of Vogel, et al. (1999) examined the attitudes of the lecturers with regard to the integration of students with learning disabilities. This was a quantitative study which examined several variables including: the type of institution (e.g., its size, whether it is private or public, a university or college); demographic variables of 420 lecturers who responded to the questionnaire; and the willingness of the lecturers to make adaptations.

A critical article on the adaptations made for students with learning disabilities in the universities (Gordon, Levandovski and Keiser 1999), asserts that more people are now defined as having learning disabilities while their disabilities are relatively slight. They examine whether the current approach is not flawed in that it provides facilities and special services for those who have relatively slight disabilities while neglecting those with the more difficult handicaps. They raise questions relating to the definition of the learning disability and wonder whether these are not groundless definitions. For example, why is a student who is average for his class and below average in his comprehension of written material and mathematics considered to have a learning disability? An additional question - if the disability is genuine, should it interfere with all stages of schoolwork and not only after studies in high school. Gordon, Levandovski and Keiser maintain that the student with a learning disability is able to choose a profession which he would be entirely unable to choose, for example medicine, without the supports provided to learning disabled students.

Other experts call for the development of a new approach to the identification of learning disabilities based on academic disabilities (Siegel, 1999). They survey the subjects that relate to the definition of learning disabilities in the context of the case of *Gudenberg v. the University of Boston*. She postulates several principal questions: Who is the person who suffers from a learning disability? How should a learning disability be assessed? What facilitations should be provided in a university institution and how should they be chosen? This is mainly a theoretical article which raises doubt as to the very existence of the phenomenon of learning disabilities. In any case, there is sharp criticism in the article regarding the use of the term in higher education in the United States.

The development of careers by students with learning disabilities as it is expressed by the students themselves was discussed by Hitchings et al. (Hitchings et al, 2001). They examined 97 students who were defined as having learning disabilities. Most of the students, while in high school, had not received the supplementary services to which they were entitled. The activities of the students for the advancement of their careers were limited. Most of them had difficulty in describing their disability and the influence of this disability on the development and planning of their career. The researchers found that the students with learning disabilities who study in the university should be supplied with services to assist them in their career development including training for self-marketing, identification of the career that is suitable for them and training in the development of self management skills. The training-treatment should continue throughout their studies in the university. This research began as a quantitative study. However, the quantitative analysis did not demonstrate the influence of the learning disability on the planning of their future careers. Later, the researchers considered each student as a case study and the verbal data were integrated into the data from the initial questionnaire. The questions for the semi-constructed interview were taken from the literature and related to five areas: Transitional programmes, career possibilities, activities for career development, the ability to explain their difficulties, and self defence.

Another approach of research is based on the constructivist paradigm; Ferri (Ferri, 2001) presents the experiences of student teachers with learning disabilities. This is a multi-case qualitative study which examines the complex reality of those who attempt

to view the situation from "*both sides of the desk*". The teachers that she interviewed were overprotective of their pupils. However, sometimes it appeared that this over protectiveness was not a result of the special needs of the pupils.

Additional research carried out in Israel was partially qualitative. The research of Einat (Einat, 2000, Einat, 2001) examined students with learning disabilities who studied in a preparatory course for the Tel Hai College during a preparatory year before their acceptance to the University of Tel Aviv. An examination of the influence of their participation in a support group on their academic achievements was found to have no real significance. Following this research she interviewed (Einat, 2001) those students during their academic years and found that even after their pedagogic assessment they could not internalize the fact that they are not guilty for their difficulties and they continue to blame themselves. They tended to continue to see themselves as 'lazy'. 'not persevering' etc.

A survey conducted among 40 students with learning disabilities from different faculties in the University of Tel Aviv (Margalit, 1997, in Heiman, 2002) showed that most of them completed their studies successfully. The students reported that they encountered seven types of difficulty: the academic and managerial staff's lack of knowledge and understanding, difficulty coping with the library, difficulties in writing and spelling mistakes, slow reading rate, difficulties in organising material, difficulties in complying with time pressure during exams and difficulties learning foreign languages. The students noted that in order to cope with the difficulties they invest much time studying, develop strategies to improve their memory, receive assistance from friends in their class and from family members, record lectures and spread their studies over more years.

Any student in higher education institutions faces new challenges. However research concerning with students with learning disabilities in Israel indicates that they experience many more difficulties and problematical assimilation. Heiman and Precel (2003) summarised the results of different studies relating to students with special needs that pointed to difficulties in: acquiring academic skills, the organization of their time and compliance with deadlines and pressure situations. These students also sensed a gap between their ability and their real achievements. It was found that in

comparison with students who did not have learning disabilities, they had lower grades and their self assessment with regard to their academic and intellectual ability was also lower.

In another study (Heiman, 2002) in a comparison between 19 SLD with learning disabilities and 190 students without learning disabilities, no differences were distinguishable in grade averages and the number of courses studied. Nevertheless the SLD saw their achievements as lower and reported far more difficulties in the arts and social disciplines and in foreign language studies.  These students developed unconventional strategies and expressed a preference for oral or visual explanations in addition to the written material. In addition they said that they had difficulty concentrating over time and lacked time to complete exams.  They also reported a stronger sense of pressure and frustration and were less confident with regard to their answers than students in the control group.  No differences were found in the sense of personal coherence between the two groups of pupils.

Several studies concluded that the components that contribute to the success of students with learning disabilities included internal variables such as self-control, self-awareness, definition of goals, determination and also external factors such as social and personal support and the use of facilitating services (Reiff Gerber and Ginsburg, 1994; Hartman-Hall and Haaga, 2002).  Other researchers in Israel (Hayam-Yonas and Friedman, 2002) noted that factors predicting the extent of success include: special talent in a specific field, a high grade point average in secondary school, ability to invest efforts over time, strong relations with a mentor, counsellor or instructor, ability to understand oneself, acceptance of the learning disability and development and utilization of learning strategies.

Additional research examined the attitudes and perceptions of the teaching staff and its influence on provision of facilitating modifications and assisting resources in different institutions (Scott and Gregg, 2000; Shaw, Scott and Mcguire, 2001). These studies suggest that there is a need for changes in lecturers' teaching methods in order to assist students with learning disabilities.  They claim that these changes would improve teaching in general in higher education institutions.  Hayam-Yonas and

Friedman (Hayam-Yonas & Friedman, 2002) categorise the types of assistance that they discovered in higher education institutes in Israel into two types:

1. Personal or individual assistance such as personal mentors, personal counselling, regular emotional support, borrowing a PC, and subsidising different services.

2. Group assistance such as special learning seminars, mentoring workshops, workshops to enable students to cope with examination phobias and use of supportive technology.

Wertheim, Vogel and Fresko examined a "Big Brother" tutoring project that was originally intended to provide study scholarships for students in exchange for weekly assistance to pupils from low socio-economic status families(Wertheim, Vogel and Fresko 2004)).The project was widened in order to enable student tutors to provide assistance to students with learning disabilities. Both in the universities and in the colleges, student tutors and students with learning disabilities expressed much satisfaction with the tutoring process, with the personal relationship that was thus created and with the contribution to studies. Although this assistance was provided by a non-professional tutor, it contributed much to the students' success in their studies.

Until now I have presented a variety of research studies examining the integration of SLD into higher education, denoting the complexity of the subject of integration. I have cited the passage of a law requiring the State to provide conditions that enable individuals with special needs to participate within the framework of mainstream education. In the USA context a law has also established policies requiring institutions of higher education to enable SLD integration and the introduction of policies recognizing the legitimacy of accommodating learning disabled students.

The situation in Israel is different as there is still no legislation on this subject. The 'Draft Law for Equality of Rights for Pupils with Learning Disabilities in Regular Education' (a bill presented by Member of Knesset, Orlev, 2002) has passed the first reading but no further legislative progress has been reached since then (Finklestein, 2005). Nevertheless voluntary organisations and associations are active in this field and attempt to engender budgeting and research activities and to distribute knowledge in order to assist the integration of those with learning disabilities into the regular

education systems for the welfare and benefit of both student and state. The Council for Higher Education has recognized the need for research in this direction and has allocated budgets to the universities' support centres for follow-up of these students. A committee was appointed  (Margalit, Breznitz and Aharoni, 1998) to examine the data in the field, identify areas for further research, and to present its recommendations to the council (Hayam-Yonas and Friedman, 2002; Einat, 2005). As a result of the absence of legislation, the state is not required to fund the integration of SLD, the identification and diagnosis of special needs; nor the support services to be provided by secondary schools, teacher training colleges and universities. [4]

The literature review deals also with principle questions of identity and definition of learning disabilities, special programs for integration, and also research studies that consider the standing of SLD how they cope with educational assignments, the effectiveness of various and special tutoring approach. To summarise, as a result of legislation that obliges the state to provide suitable learning conditions to assist teaching disabled students to study within regular educational settings, there is a significant increase in the number of SLD in universities and colleges. These students can be helped by different types of supports to complete their studies successfully. In the literature review I described the difficulties of SLD and the special supports that are needed to help them. Now it can be valuable to enquire how these students begin the process of becoming professional educators. The present research examines the next stage in which the SLD begin to assimilate within the world of work, as a teacher with professional skills.

The discussion of the issue of LD teachers in various settings in Israel provides evidence of the existence of a dispute concerning their ability and legitimacy to be teachers. The analysis of this dispute has been undertaken by research which investigated the relationship between aspects of personality and professionalism. Research on SLD in this direction discussed personal perspectives, qualities drawn from personal development, and inter-personal sensitivity that can advance our understanding of the needs of SLD and of teachers who experienced the education system as LD pupils.   These studies guide us to listen to and respond to these

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[4] Now, year 2008, the law is awaiting final procedures.

students' special needs (Dahan and Russak, 2005; Avissar, 2005). The aspirations of the present research is to enrich and add further insight to these earlier studies. The research uses narrative case studies to present the unique professional paths of three LD teachers. The findings can assist those discussing these issues while focusing attention on the potential qualities as educators of the LD teachers whose stories are presented here.

**2.2 The Narrative point of view**

The development of the professional self in teaching from a narrative point of view will be one of the focuses of my research. Teaching situations are characterized by a high level of complexity stemming from the multiplicity of human factors which are involved in the teaching processes and from the large variety of functions which the teacher is expected to fulfill. One of the inevitable results of this complexity is the need to cope with unknown situations and to find solutions for problems which could not be foreseen (Kagan, 1992; Ben-Peretz, 1995). The need to cope daily with a heavily burdened reality encourages a process in which teachers construct a pedagogic system based on their own personal experience in the classroom more than the prescriptions of others (Putnam, 1991).

One of the important components of this system is the unique professional self of the teacher. A significant contribution to the definition and characteristics of the professional knowledge of teachers was provided by Shulman (1986), who coined the term 'pedagogic knowledge content'. These terms relates to the knowledge accumulated by teachers during their training and work and is expressed in the planning of their pedagogic activities, in their performance in the classroom and in their reflective thinking following their actions. Shulman noted a number of categories which are included in the pedagogic knowledge content: knowledge in a specific field of knowledge, general pedagogic knowledge, specific pedagogic knowledge, curricular knowledge, value-related knowledge, knowledge and characteristics of learners and knowledge regarding class management. The teacher's knowledge is collected from two sources, the first from empirical and philosophical research and the second from personal experience. The knowledge derived from personal experience is principally narrative and is anchored in the contexts of these

personal experiences (Kupferberg and Alstein, 1998). Ben-Peretz (1995) sees ambiguity as the central characteristic of teaching and claims that the basic psychological process in the teacher's professional development is the attempt to gain control over a reality which is full of uncertainty. Coping with a lack of control is expressed in a process of acquisition of knowledge. Personal experience plays a critical role in this process, since it enables the achievement of a certain control over the uncertainty of the learner, while analytical technical knowledge is not efficient in achieving such control. Ben-Peretz whose view is similar to that of Shulman (1986), believes that the significant contribution of personal experience, leads the learner to consolidate rules which will be useful for him in his practical pedagogic work. In the present research an examination is made of the reflective feedback by a teacher at the beginning of her teaching path, relating to the manner in which she explains her actions during a lesson and her resulting insights.

A consensus has been reached in current professional development research in education (Zilberstein, 1998; Banks, 1998; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001b; Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2001; Kupferberg and Gilat, 2000 and others), that it is possible to study the development of the pedagogic system of the teacher and the student teacher through their personal stories. A personal story is not only the form of conversation found very frequently in written and spoken conversation, but it also reflects human thought (Bruner, 1990; Lieblich et al., 1998, Elbaz, 1991; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). In order to explain to ourselves what has happened we tell others what has occurred, or reconstruct the event together with our conversational partner. While verbalizing the story we interpret the event and present our interpretation, our evaluation (Labov, 1972) or our social self (Schiffrin, 1996) or our psychological self (Kupferberg and Greene, 1998; Kupferberg and Green, 2001) using verbal and non-verbal means with body language and facial expressions.

The pedagogic system crystallizes and develops for teachers from the stage of basic training to the stage when they become experts (Berliner, 1986) through learning and interaction with other people and as a result of events which are engraved in their memories (Carter, 1994). Personal experience constitutes one of the most influential sources on the development of pedagogic knowledge and the shaping of the pedagogic personality. The knowledge acquired through the narrative has a stronger

influence on the learner than analytical knowledge (Zilberstein, 1998). The development of the pedagogic system is connected with the telling of stories (Ben-Peretz, 1995) which constitutes a prominent component of reflective thinking.

The narrative biographic approach in a historic perspective: Elbaz-Luwisch (2001b) reviews the background to the growth of the narrative biographic approach. She maintains that disappointment with the leading comprehensive narratives which influenced different fields of research, led in the post-Modernist age to an increase in explanations restricted to specific conditions, to a perception of cultural relativity and to an emphasis on local stories and knowledge limited to the space and time when they were composed. From the 1980's a substantial change occurred in research, turning to the study of the teacher's thinking. In many research studies interviews with teachers and other educators were added to observations where the central interest was how the teachers explained their manner of activity (Zilberstein and Krinaski, 1992; Lomaski-Feder, 1997; McCowen, 1997). This research work constitutes narrative research. The interest in teacher's biographies and autobiographies (Butt and Raymond, 1988; Zellermayer, 2003) in stories and life stories (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Elbaz, 1991; Carter, 1993; Gudmunsdottir, 1991, 1997) and life histories (Goodson, 1992) contributed to the description and comprehension of educational activity.

Basic assumptions of narrative biographical research in teaching and education research declare that the term 'narrative' means a basic form of search for meaning. It was awarded much consideration among psychologists (Polkinghorne, 1988; Bruner, 1986; Lieblich, 1993) who noted that the telling of stories is a human activity which has existed in all cultures and there is a similarity between the story structures which exist in different cultures. The purpose of the story is to create meaning. Bruner (Bruner, 1986) distinguished between two main ways of creating meaning: Narrative research and paradigmatic research. Paradigmatic research, points to things and proves its claims by creating a logical and formal connection between different statements and between them and the state of things in or outside of a laboratory. In narrative research, the explanation is intended to demonstrate how it is possible to unite different items of information in order to create a complete whole, i.e. a story.

In other words, the general framework of the different events includes parts of the story and organizes them according to a meaningful order.

Polkinghorne distinguishes between two types of narrative research (Polkinghorne, 1995). One is research in which a narrative is created in order to clarify the meaning of a series of events. The second type is 'an analysis of 'narratives', in which the researcher collects stories as data relating to the subject which interests him and analyses them in order to reach a general comprehension of the subject.

What is the relevant story framework? Casey examined life stories of progressive teachers who worked for social reform (Casey, 1992). Their entire life histories were perceived as answers explaining the formation of their identities in society under the influence of gender on their careers. In contrast Cortazzi (Cortazzi 1993) identified short stories which responded to the question: 'What is it like to be a teacher?' analyzing them in order to clarify the concepts and contradictions around which the discourse was organized. In this case the significant unit was the story, without any relation to the person who told it. A different approach was taken by Connolly and Clandinin who focusing on the story of the present work of the teacher and asked the teacher about his past history in order to gain a more profound understanding of the significance of the work for that teacher. The researcher takes the teacher's story 'backwards' in order that the teacher can hear his own history from an external point of view and even react to it (Connolly & Clandinin, 1990; Lieblich et al., 1998; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001b; Pritzker, 1999).

The use of biographic narrative research as a dialectic connection between theory and practice emphasizes the interest in what the teachers think and tell, and the provision of attention to the telling of the teachers' stories, all constitute a confirmation that the considerations of the education workers produce knowledge which is important for the system. This fact is liable to encourage them to examine themselves and to initiate change processes in their teaching work (Connolly and Clandinin, 1990). The teachers observe their own activities, reach new understandings and decide to make changes that they see as necessary. This is a dialectic approach which sees a continual mutual relationship between theory and action. The theory can suggest directions for action, the field work enlightens the theoretical thinking and corrects it, but if fact it

also gives birth to new thinking and development of theory (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997). The biographic narrative does not enable prediction of human behavior in the field of education or control of this behavior, but it does provide knowledge that individuals and groups can use in order to increase their control of their own actions (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001a; Ben-Peretz, 1995).

The narrative is a suitable method to obtain the inner expression of educators. Looking at educational activity from the inside, gaining knowledge regarding their activities, for example a teacher's autobiographic story (Lieblich, 1998: Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2001; Pritzker, 2000), or the construction of a narrative which presents the teacher's personal teaching programme (Connolly and Clandinin, 1990). This internal perspective is used to balance the research debate which for many generations spoke about teachers, children and the education field without giving any attention at all to the voices of those who came from this field themselves. There is no intention here to completely negate the importance of the external viewpoint, the evaluation and criticism of educational activity, but rather to propose an attentive and respectful dialogue between the two perspectives (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001b).

Biographic narrative research studies show that the 'teacher's voice' is not uniform and it is important to present their unique voices and the differences between teachers. This can be deduced from the work of Brown and Gilligan (Brown and Gilligan, 1992), or from research studies which discussed the voice of the teacher (Elbaz, 1991; Sarig, 2000) and also from Lazarovitch and Fuchs (Lazarovitch and Fuchs, 1996) that analyzed the autobiographies of school principals in Israel. Following these researches there is interest to learn and enquire the autobiographical stories of teachers with learning disabilities.

In summary, in this section I have referred to the topic of narrative research, which enables one to study with the aid of case study research and the subjects' own stories regarding their personal and professional worlds and at the same time to express these subjects unique voices.  The autobiographical stories of the teachers reveal personal memories that enrich our knowledge of their professional judgment.  In the current research which examines a unique population (learning disabled teachers at the start of their careers) there is an interest in recognizing how the teachers' professional

identity is constructed based on explanations that they themselves offer? What is included in the "professional self" and what in the "personal-professional self?" Researchers cited in this section note that school experiences of students with learning disabilities are constant trials of disappointment and frustration. Will there be expression of these feelings in the autobiographies of these teachers? Will these memories assist the teacher in her professional judgment at the outset of her career? Following the literature review, the leading research question of the present research will be:

- What is the contribution of the 'Personal Self' as it appears in the autobiographic story to our understanding of the 'professional self' of teachers with learning disabilities at the inception of their career?

# 3. Methodology and Research

In this chapter I will present the central paradigm, the qualitative research, the procedure and the method of the research based on research literature and I will describe the use of this methodology in this research. In the beginning, the definition and the characteristics of case study will be described; approaches regarding the analysis of stories will be interpreted. Studying the professional self through Figurative Positioning will be emphasised.

Several approaches of narrative analysis will be employed in the analysis of the teachers' stories, and one of which is the analysis of stories through the technique of *'figurative positioning'*. At the outset I will present in brief related concepts to this analysis: the teller of the personal story presents different dimensions of his self, social dimension, psychological, cultural, and professional. In order to build the interpersonal self and the intrapersonal self the teller uses various evaluation methods. The concept of *'positioning'* relates to the interpersonal dimension and is defined in the way that we position in the dialogue between our selves in relation to others when managing interpersonal communication (Kupferberg and Green, p. 151, 2001). *'Positioning'* is employed by linguistic means through which the teller places himself in relation to other images in the story in the past time or in relation to other participants in events in the present time. The teller uses positioning techniques to show how he perceives himself. *'Figurative language'* refers to the use of linguistic techniques such as metaphors, images, idioms, and analogies, and with their help the teller presents worlds, content, abstract concepts that are difficult to explain and that express parts of the intrapersonal self of the teller. *'Organized figurative language'* is a linguistic structure that integrates the personal story and *'positioning'* within it and presents the essential self of the story teller. Identification of central, repetitive elements in personal stories enables the identification of *organizing figurative structures* that point to coherence among all of the stories and refer to additional discussion of this topic later in the study.

In the second part of this chapter I will present the current research including the following components: the research questions, the population, the full procedure, and

the stages of the analysis, the research tools and methods. In the final part of this chapter I will address issues such as triangulation ethics and the limitations of this research.

## 3.1 A Case Study - Definitions, and Characteristics

A case study - especially if it is unique and special, provides a basis from which to learn about human behaviour - either individual or organizational - and about the processes that take place in the case that is studied (Yosefon, 2001) . The literature dealing with case studies is varied from the point of view of its definitions and I shall therefore present a number of these definitions.  Guba and Lincoln (1981) define a case study as a framework which provides information, whose boundaries spread from a description of an individual to descriptions of organizations, societies and cultures, while the contents of the case study are, in effect, determined by the research goal and questions.

Patton (1990) and Robson (1993) emphasize the main characteristic of this sort of research that focuses on a case.  The case may be a person, a group, an organization or any other unit for analysis that is defined by the researcher as a "case". The research deals with the particular, while using different and varied sources to explain the phenomenon or case. Jary and Jary (1991) add an additional component in their consideration of the possibility of making inferences from the specific to the generic. They define a case study as the study of one example of a phenomenon, which is under research or as a model or case which explains a wider phenomenon, and which it is perhaps possible to use as a test-case for the wider general thesis.

Platt surveys the history of the idea of the case study in American sociology and claims that the disappearance of the term (Platt, 1992), until the beginning of the 1960's resulted from the barrage of severe criticism that was hurled at it from a methodological point of view.  The criticism ceased when a consensus began to crystallize that a case study is a legitimate research method, by which it is possible to collect many and rich data on one case, where the concentrated description is the key

to understanding the researched phenomenon. A researcher who uses the case study approach wishes to collect information regarding the thought and daily activity of people in the "case" which he studies, how they form and create their self and social awareness and also - how they establish those interpretations known as social constructions (Yosefon, 2001). The researcher collects data in the research arena, deals with analysis and understanding of the activities, and later - with an attempt to describe prototypes from which it is possible to arrive at a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study in the case and also to make generalizations and clarifications that enable the understanding of wider phenomena.

An intrinsic case study deals with the nature of the case, with the discovery of the "self" embodied therein and enables insights principally involving an intense observation of the case. The product of an intrinsic case study may have a more psychological hue. Another option is the collective case study in which a collection of specific cases is studied, from which various things may be learned either by means of a comparison, which emphasizes the generic character or by means of unification which emphasizes similarity. In a certain sense the comparison, in this sort of study, is the opposite of the "condensed-description" that is found in the intrinsic case study (Stake, 2000).

An example of a research which examines processes for a collection of cases can be found in Denzine (1997), who studied changes in the careers of alcoholics. Each person in the study was in the research sense a "case", in the sense that each case and each process has its own trademark of something exclusively its own. Nevertheless, there is a more general pattern and this creates elements which are common to the other cases. Starting from the assumption that a person is not "a mere" person, but he is a product and summary of identities and social-cultural processes, it is obvious that the specific case study can also support general research.

In the contents of the present research it is possible that a number of case studies of teachers with learning disabilities will enable a more general understanding regarding their part in the educational system. It can be said that there are two points of view regarding the consideration of case studies: in descriptive and intensive terms from a

perspective of the complete entity within its environment, and simultaneously - consideration of the unique phenomenon of a given social unit (Merriam, 1988). The choice of the case study method constitutes a modest statement regarding the desire to investigate pieces of reality in a way that is as close as possible to that reality. In order to understand their point of view, the best way is to investigate the participants in their own voice.

It seems that there is sometimes certain superciliousness in the way in which the welfare and educational services provide assistance - especially when populations with special needs are concerned. The choice of a research strategy that is based on a constructivist paradigm emphasizes a humanistic-democratic approach. According to this approach, the person is perceived as one who acts willingly and consciously while examining and negotiating with others in a considered and autonomous manner (Yosefon, 2001). The present research examines three case studies of teachers with learning disabilities at the beginning of their teaching careers. The data collection was based on the autobiographical story of the teachers. Several approaches to analysis of stories will be described.

## 3.2 Approaches regarding the Analysis of Stories

Following the collection of the stories which we wish to analyse, the task is to reconstruct the story and to discover what is hidden within, or its deep meanings. At the same time the researcher must decide, whether to emphasize the story or the analysis of the story (Sabar Ben Yehoshua, 2001). Schematically, it is possible to divide the different approaches regarding story analysis into two: One approach studies the form or the structure of the story. The second approach studies the content or different contents of the story (Lieblich et al., 1995; Lieblich, 1998). The researcher can decide whether to concentrate on the structure or the content or on both.

The linguists Labov and Waletzky (1966) suggest that each oral story regarding a personal experience contains five parts, the: orientation, complication, evaluation, decision-making and concluding parts. This structure is typical of all stories,

irrespective of their specific content and thus it can be considered to be a structural model.  Another structural model for the analysis of stories follows the positive or negative developments of the story. A positive development occurs in a story when an event in the story is evaluated more positively that the previous event.  A negative development is when an event in the story is evaluated as more negative than its predecessor.  The progress of the story may also be characterized by its stability, when the events which appear consecutively are evaluated to the same extent as positive or negative.  According to Gergen and Gergen (1988) (in Sabar Ben Yehoshua, 2001), there are three types of simple narrative: in a stable narrative the story is either positive or negative all the time.  In a progressive narrative the events continually become more positive.  In a regressive narrative the events become more negative with time.  They identify several structures of complex stories which combine elements which are stable, regressive and progressive in the same story.

 The research of Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiah and Zilber, (1995) presents the stories of two Israeli men in their forties, which differ from all the other participants' stories described in the research.  Although the contents of the stories of the two men are different greatly one from another, one had become very religious and the other was a film producer they nevertheless had the same structure. This was a two-stage structure in which their lives were described as two stages, one preceding the transformation and the second following the change.  This alteration is described as a 'rebirth', a profound transformation having a spiritual creative nature and character of self-realization.  Their lives before the transformation were presented as lacking significance and uniqueness, in complete contrast to their lives following the transformation.  There is room to assume that this structure will characterize conversion stories in general, where the 'conversion' may also include 'the path' in terms of self-realization of different sorts.

The Content Approach to story analysis takes an interest in the world of overt and covert content of the story or of parts of the story.  For a content analysis of the story in its entirety, Lieblich recommends that the text be read several times until the focuses and main subjects of the story are revealed.  Repetitions, deletions, abbreviated or detailed consideration by the author, 'forgetting' incidents and a later return to them, or ignoring them, might indicate a focal subject.

Another way of data analysis is by division into categories and learning their meaning. According to the Constructivist research approach the context has crucial importance, and it is impossible to understand individual words outside their immediate and overall context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Shlasky and Alpert, 2007). Sometimes sorting content into categories may remove words from their context and it is therefore necessary to take care that the selection is not technical and quantitative but content-related in nature. Shkedi (2003) explains and demonstrates the four stages required for content analysis by sorting into categories, from which two potential products of the analysis may be obtained: a focused description and a theoretical description, according to a hierarchy of simplification and interpretation. Each of these descriptions can be the final stage of the analytic process, depending on whether the research goal is to create a focused description or a theoretical description.

Categorization is the basis for the data analysis, and it is based on the connection between parts of information which appear to belong to the same phenomenon. The categorization is based on the sorting, and it is performed by breaking down the data in order to understand their significance. This process is performed by means of a comparison between the different parts of information in order to find points of similarity, differences and connections between them (Shkedi, 2003). There are two aspects to the categories: the internal aspect – each category has meaning with regard to the data; and the external aspect – each category has meaning with regard to other categories and with regard to the conceptual perspective. In order to follow the personal story, personal memories, and the professional self and to link them I use the notion of Figurative Positioning.

**3.3 Studying the Professional Self through Figurative Positioning.**

Traditionally, the term '*positioning*' (Davies and Harre, 1990) relates to the interpersonal dimension, and is defined as the way in which we position our self in a discussion in relation to others during interpersonal communication. According to Bamberg (1997), positioning relates to the linguistic means used by the narrator who positions himself in relation to the other images in the world of the story in the past

tense, or in relation to other participants in a discussion during the verbalisation of the story in present tense. Using the means of positioning, the narrator constructs intrapersonal dimensions that show how he perceives his own self.

Another approach that examines the narrative debate, suggests a way in which it is possible to condense a detailed personal story into figurative patterns that are meaningful for the process of professional development (Kupferberg and Green, 2001). Following Labov (1972), attempts were made to investigate means to assess the linguistic forms used by the story teller, such as syntax structures, choice of words, shifts in the grammatical tense, figurative language, quotations, personal pronouns etc. in order to construct the interpersonal and the intrapersonal self.

Figurative language, metaphors, images, formulary expressions and analogues are means for linguistic positioning that enables the narrator to express abstract terms or terms that it is difficult to explain. It organises, it is a linguistic structure that summarises the personal story and the positioning process within it and presents the succinct self of the narrator through the figurative pattern.

- The identification of positioning processes in personal stories as part of the educational discourse facilitates the identification of how the narrator perceives his professional self (Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe, 1994). The method is based on two methodological principles: the first principle is the principle of distancing (Schon, 1991) determining that the extent of involvement of the researcher during the narrative interview should be minimal. It is important to define how the narrator perceives his professional self, without the researcher changing this perception. The second principle is the principle of triangulation meaning the analysis of data according to a number of viewpoints. Kupferberg and Green (2001) suggest that analysis should be conducted according to linguistic and psychological viewpoints and after this the data should be integrated.

**Research Questions**

The question on which the present research focuses is:

1. What does the autobiographic story contribute to our understanding of the 'professional self' of the teacher? More precisely what does the autobiographical story of the teacher with a learning disability at the inception of her career; contribute to our understanding of the 'professional self' of this teacher, as is expressed in her reflective feedback regarding her lessons?

From this general question, additional questions are derived:

1.1. What are the components of the intra-personal self and the inter-personal self, which can be identified from the autobiographical story of the teacher with a learning disability?
1.2. What are the components of the 'professional self' which can be identified from the reflective feedback regarding her lesson, of the teacher with a learning disability?
1.3. Is it possible to identify repetitive components (patterns) from the autobiographical story that appear in the professional considerations of the teacher?

**3.4 The Research Population and the Research Procedure**

The research population included three teachers with learning disabilities, at the inception of their career in teaching.  All three of them had completed their studies for a first academic degree in education at the teacher training college level and were qualified to teach. One of them was qualified to teach sciences in a primary school and the other two teachers were qualified to teach special education (ages 3-21). Additional details concerning each teacher are presented in the Findings chapter, at the beginning of the presentation of the analysis of the autobiographic interview conducted with each teacher. The teachers were approached after selection from the

list of names of students who studied in the teacher training college and had been diagnosed as having a learning disability and recognised as entitled to special modifications during their studies in the college. The research data was collected during the practicum year of one teacher, while the two other teachers were at the beginning of their second year of work. After the teachers consented to participate in the research, the research subject and its process (follow-up of the professional assimilation of teachers with learning disabilities) was explained to them and they were ensured that their participation would remain anonymous.

At this point I would like to point that the researcher had previously known two of the teachers, who were her pupils during their college studies and were even mentored directly by her during their teaching practicum; these were the special education teachers. There was no prior relationship with the science teacher. The teachers are given fictive names and a few biographical details were altered in order to ensure the anonymity of the respondents

The research stages included the following steps:

a. An autobiographical interview in which the teacher was asked to tell the story of her life to the researcher. The conversation with each teacher lasted an hour and a half, on average. The interview was recorded and transcribed.

b. The researcher visited the school where the teacher taught and observed her lessons. After the lesson the researcher held a conversation with the teacher in which the teacher gave reflective feedback concerning the lesson that she had taught, and the conversation was recorded and transcribed. (If the teachers requested it, the researcher gave her own feedback regarding the lessons that she had observed following her last visit to the class. This feedback and the conversations that developed as a result were not included in the research).

c. The teacher was asked to describe an educational event from her work, according to her own choice. The conversation was recorded and transcribed.

### 3.4.1 The Research Tools

a. The *autobiographical interview*: In order to obtain the autobiographical story of the teacher an open interview was held in which the teacher was asked to tell the story of her life. The principle of distancing was maintained (Schon, 1991) so that the researcher refrained almost completely from intervening during the procedure of the interview in order not to direct or influence the narrator in the creation of her personal story. The few questions that were asked served as an 'invitation' to express the narrator's emotional experiences (for example: '*how did that girl feel?*' '*How did you feel when ...?*' or were reflective and affirmed the related experience). The interviewees chose to tell about the events that they related from a store of memories and experiences that were significant for them, knowing the subject of the research. It is almost certain that the autobiographic story in other circumstances would have other emphases.

b. *Reflective feedback* regarding the lesson: After the researcher observed the lesson she invited the teacher to analyse the lesson and to explain her motives during the lesson to the best of her understanding. The researcher did not guide or direct the teacher, nor did she open a discussion with her, but rather, listened to her explanations. If questions were asked, they were mainly clarifying questions.

c. Description of an *educational event*: the teacher is asked to talk about an educational event from her area of work. This component was chosen in order to expand the scope of the teacher's educational 'professional knowledge' and 'beliefs'. Although in the reflective feedback regarding the lesson knowledge might be obtained regarding the analysis of the lesson itself, the description of an educational event may reveal 'personal-professional-knowledge' that has formed from the teacher's personal experience both as a professional and from her personal past experiences.

## 3.5 Methods for the Analysis of the Interviews

The research methodology used in the present research relied on basic assumptions that were detailed in the theoretical background. These assumptions underlie the present research in general and the narrative research in particular.

**Structural analysis and content analysis**: The research data (the autobiographical interview, the reflective feedback for the lessons and the descriptions of educational events), were first divided into stories. The stories were numbered and are presented in their entirety as appendices. Some of the stories appear in the Findings chapter in order to help the reader to follow the path of the story's analysis. The division into stories is a structural division according to Labov (1972) and it includes the following components: précis, orientation, a series of events creating a problem or unexpected situation, problem-solution, assessment and coda or conclusion. The story structure is appropriate in most cases to the contents from which it is composed. Within each life story, the different parts of the story, contain hidden worlds of content such as: the positioning (Bamberg, 1997 in Kupferberg and Green 2001), how the narrator positions herself in relation to other figures in the story, and what are the metaphors and images used by the teacher in order to describe events from her personal and professional worlds. There are components such as repetitions (repeated use of the same word, or similar verbs, use of quotations and repetitions of a complete story or parts of it), that testify to the intra-personal and inter-personal self of the narrator. A condensed description of events, skipping a period of her life or events and returning to them, offer the researcher of the autobiographical story an opportunity (Lieblich , 1998) to learn something significant.

Components of 'professional knowledge' known in the literature as 'personal-professional knowledge' were identified within the teacher's reflective feedback concerning the lesson that she taught and also from the description of an educational event, according to the following criteria:

- Expressions of 'pedagogic content knowledge' (Shulman, 1986), including knowledge in the specific subject area that the teacher teaches, general pedagogic knowledge, (i.e. teaching strategies, curricular knowledge, knowledge concerning

values, knowledge regarding the learners and knowledge regarding the management of the class);

- Expressions testifying to the teacher's ability to read the class mapping (Berliner, 1986); and
- Expressions testifying to use of a reasoned rule (Elbaz, 1983; 2001b) where the teacher explains the rationale underlying the rule that she uses.

And finally, a comparison was made between the description of events as described in the autobiography and the related descriptions described in the reflective feedback, for each of the teachers. The stages of this analysis are set out below.

### Stages of the Data Analysis

The nine stages set out here show how the findings and insights given by this research were determined or arrived at through a structured and systematic analysis of the data. These nine stages were conducted separately for each data set: the transcripts from the autobiographic interview; the accounts of reflective feedback; and the descriptions of significant educational events for each interviewee.

### Stage 1

Initial reading– the researcher reads the whole interview without any interpretations or analysis in order to gain a general impression as described by the teacher.

### Stage 2

Second and third reading, looking carefully and going deeper into content as recommended in the research literature (Lieblich, 1998). Lieblich emphasises the parts in the story that have psychological roots by which the narrator creates an account of an inner life, thoughts and feelings. These different important elements include:

**Forgetfulness** – For example: Mira tells her life story and suddenly "remembers" that she skipped a very important event of her life (A9): *'I missed out an important part'* and indeed the narrator, who has already advanced along the events of her life, remembers that she has jumped over an important period. She goes back to the important episode, '*I decided to go for a diagnosis'*.

**Repetitions** – For example: Tamar expresses the illogical experiences in her life, repeating again and again several facts (A16): ….I thought that that *was **Illogical**, as a child who read so much, it shouldn't happen…. I understood that there was something **illogical** here, that a child who reads and writes and creates was making mistakes, it wasn't natural; something was **illogical**….*

The **repetition** of the word ' ***illogical*** ' testifies to the importance of the issue described: the narrator had identified the 'illogical' situation as a difficulty characterized by the wide gap between being an educated literate person on one hand and a writer who made lots of mistakes on the other.

**Stage 3**

Division of the text by themes to create categories. (Shkedi, 2003).  The themes were determined by the topics within the stories and the frequency of their repetition Examples of the themes which emerged are found in the Findings chapter:

"The subjects/categories which emerge from her autobiographic story included consideration of: her special personal characteristics and skills (A1, 2, 5, 12, 13, 14, 20, and 21); her memories from her studies in primary school and secondary school (A 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 19 and A20), her deliberations regarding her choice of a profession and the decision to study science teaching (A5, 6 and A15); the college studies and the beginning of her work as a teacher (A 7, 8, 23 and A24); the revelation of her learning disability, her feelings and coping strategies (A16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23 and A24). "

A fuller account of each category and how it was determined is given in the findings chapter.

**Stage 4**

A second division of the texts into stories following the structure given by Labov (1972), who suggested that each story includes six parts.  He named them as follows: essence, orientation, sequence of events creating a problem or an unexpected situation, problem-solving, assessment and closure. All the stories are attached in the appendixes. The following two examples demonstrate this division:

 (A-11) Tamar

1- *It bothered me that they gave us so much homework during the vacation* - **essence**.

2 - *The teachers dropped it on the parents* - **orientation**.

3 - *The teacher did not provide an explanation of the chapter but it had to be learnt alone fractions and other things* - **creating a problem**

4 - *So what is the school for?* - **problem-solving**

5 - *It's superfluous? Was it for friends? I wasn't sociable* - **assessment**

6 - *I preferred to read books and, be by myself*- **closure/coda**

(A-3) Noa

1 - *When I began to study special education, in the first year, I understood that something was not right with me*- **essence**

2 - *I needed to find out what was happening with me, and I went for a diagnosis*- **orientation**

3 - *Suddenly a sort of dam burst: something in reading comprehension and also something in concentration difficulties and of course dyscalculation…Very, very difficult, I received a blow, I was in shock. I remember that the diagnostic tester told me: But how do you want to be a teacher at all if you have something functional which is not correct, not normal.* - **sequence of events creating a problem**

4 - *It was very, very difficult for me to accept this, I felt that this was a personal failure and also that because of this my dream could not be realized*- **problem-solving**

5 - *This was a disappointment and a sense that something was wrong with me and not simply that I felt that something was out of order*- **assessment**

6 - *It was in my first year of studies, it was very difficult for me. Everything was so stuck*- **closure/coda**

**Stage 5**

Analysis of each story at the meaning level, according to Lieblich et al. (1995) and Kupferberg, and Green (2001). A personal story is not only in the form of a written or spoken text, but it can take the form of reflection or a thought process. In order to explain to ourselves what has happened we tell others what has occurred, or we reconstruct the event with our conversational partner. While verbalizing the story we reflect and interpret the event and present our own interpretation and evaluation (Labov, 1972). Through this we present a view of our social self or our psychological

self (Kupferberg and Greene, 1998; Kupferberg and Green, 2001) using verbal and non-verbal means including body language and facial expressions. **Repetitions** in the sequence of the story, **'forgetfulness', use of images, metaphors** and the f**igurative positioning** of the narrator in relation to other figures and events in the stories as well as **the frequency of elements** can all add meaning. These aspects can be identified in the following story:

(A-3) Noa - *When I began to study special education, in the first year, I understood that something was not right with me and I needed to find out what was happening with me, and I went for a diagnosis.* **Suddenly a sort of dam burst**: *something in reading comprehension and also something in concentration difficulties and of course dyscalculation…* **Very, very difficult**, **I received a blow**, *I was in shock. I remember that the diagnostic tester told me: "But how do you want to be a teacher at all if you have something functional which is not correct, not NORMAL".* **It was very, very difficult** *for me to accept this, I felt that this was a personal failure and also that because of this my dream could not be realized… This was a disappointment and a sense that something was wrong with me and not simply that I felt that something was out of order. It was in my first year of studies*, **it was very difficult** *for me. Everything was so stuck.*

> **Suddenly a sort of dam burst** – metaphor
> **I received a blow** -– metaphor
> **Very, very difficult … Very, very difficult** – repetitions
> **Everything was so stuck** – figurative positioning

**Stage 6**

This stage is an examination of the congruence between categories which represent content and the meaning of the stories as they emerge from the interpretative analysis. At this stage a comparison was made of the content categories on the one hand, (ensuring that they were not purely technical) with the interpretative analysis of the meanings in the story on the other hand, to ascertain whether the content categories supported the interpretative analysis. This is the stage at which the researcher stops the analysis process and interpretations and examines the two previous stages. This can be seen as triangulation between the stages of analysis which occurs in addition to the triangulation between sources of data and between the perspectives of critical

friends (described in the next section, 3.6 – Triangulation) which increases the credibility and integrity of the findings.

**Stage 7**

Identification of the organising story from all the data sources (Kupferberg and Gilat, 2000; Kupferberg and Green, 2001) for each of the three teachers. Identification of central, repetitive elements in autobiographical stories, reflective feedback on lessons and the description of educational events enables the identification of the *organizing story* and the *organizing figurative structures* that point to the coherence of the stories for each teacher.

**Stage 8**

Summary for each teacher.  A review of the analysis and the organising story is used to identify a leading theme for each case study for example: Tamar (A – section 4.1.5) and Tamar (R – section 4.2.4). At this stage the leading themes emerged these were - **The importance of order** (4.3.1); **The Teacher's Influence on the Pupils** (4.3.2); **The Learning Disability** (4.3.3).

**Stage 9**

Following the completion of the process in full for the first two sources of data for each teacher separately, a summary was composed. The summary (stage 8) for each interviewee unifies the content categories with the interpretation of the meaning; the figurative positioning as they emerged from the autobiographic story (A); and the reflective feedback (R) in order to form a complete picture within which the topics described in these stories are intertwined. These topics are summarised in table at the beginning of the discussion chapter (pp.91-93) showing the highlights for each teacher based on high frequency statements within the texts**.** Those statements were mentioned in the summary, in the *'organising positioning'*  and beforehand in the interpretative analysis of the stories**.**  These constitute expressions that represents the personal-self alongside topics similar to and sometimes identical to those that represent the professional-self. Their presentation in two columns in the tables, clearly shows the possible links between the personal-self derived from the personal memories told in the autobiographic interview, and the professional-self derived from the reflective feedback for the lesson and the description of the educational event.

**3.6 Triangulation**

The findings of the present research are based on a narrative analysis of the data collected from three different angles regarding the personal professional life of the teacher. The autobiographical interview reveals the historical story including expressions of the intra-personal and inter-personal self of the teacher. The reflective feedback reveals the teacher's professional self and style of thinking. The description of an educational event from the teacher's work reveals her personal-professional self and values. Analysis of the data and its transformation into findings is the product of my interpretations as a researcher, based on the professional literature and my personal understanding of the data spread out before me. In addition to this procedure I asked two colleagues to be my critical friends. One is an expert in pedagogy and counselling, the other is coordinator of the Induction project in Israel and an expert in professional development of teachers and teacher educators. Each of them reviewed the analysis, offered some comments and confirmed my interpretations. The use of these three sources of data and three readers was intended to reduce the possibility of random chance in the description of the findings and to increase the trustworthiness and the credibility of the findings produced from the three raw sources of data.

**3.7 Ethical Considerations in the Present Research**

The teachers participating in the research consented to participate in the research after having been informed of the research subject and its procedures. They were promised that they would remain anonymous when the research was written up and if the results are published. In order not to expose the fact that the teachers have learning disabilities, head-teachers in the school in which the teachers taught, knew only that the research dealt with the integration of new teachers from their point of view. One teacher of the three asked to maintain full anonymity, and so the anonymity of all three participants is upheld. The names of the teachers are fictitious and a few biographical details were altered. The research findings are the result of interpretation by the researcher and are her responsibility. If the research or parts of it are published in the future, this will be done with the teachers' consent.

During the collection of the research data, the researcher abstained from reacting and expressing her opinion with regard to the teachers' work. After the conversation following the last lesson, the researcher gave each teacher feedback emphasizing positive aspects of the teacher's instructional skills and educational approach. Each of the teachers asked for advice concerning a pupil with whom they had difficulties, and in accordance with the ethical approach accepted in qualitative research, the researcher willingly responded and provided her professional knowledge in the area of psychological advice and improvement of teaching methods.

The research does not pretend to present factual truth concerning what happened in the lives of the three teachers nor in the educational settings presented in their stories. The research presents their personal stories, which represents their narrative truth, as they chose to tell it from their free choice and based on their personal memories.

## 3.8 The Limitations of the Research

During the research and when writing it up I had many questions that remained open and unresolved, and I would like to note them as limitations of the research. I shall mention five limitations relating to the area of the qualitative research method: the authenticity of the story, *'the historical truth'* as opposed to personal memory, limitations on generalisation of the research findings, the extent of centrality of the researcher's interpretation, and the notion of the language, the translation of the data from Hebrew to English.

The first limitation, the extent of the story's authenticity: an important part of the present research rests on the autobiographic story told by each teacher. Does knowing the research subject influence the choice of the personal memories? Is the authenticity of the story thus harmed? Is it possible that declaration of another name for the research subject would 'invite' other memories? Would a different life story be obtained? Yet, according to qualitative research ethics and those of the researcher, it would not be proper to ignore or to conceal the identified subject of the research. It

seems that this limitation of the research is reduced when the other research data (reflective feedback on the lessons and description of educational events) provide 'neutral' information concerning the teacher's professional self, without any direct identification or direct relationship to her learning disability.

The second limitation, the research does not deal with truth but rather with memories. Dealing with the personal story often 'invites' painful memories of hurtful experiences as a student embedded in the narrator's autobiographical stories. This does not mean that these constitute the narrator's life. These are memories concerning part of his life. Moreover, it is impossible to bring the narrators teachers to account: *'the exhausted teachers', 'the destructive teacher'* and the teacher who *'left me with a scar'* without minimising the importance of personal memory and the emotions that accompany it. These are not historical facts (regarding the education system and the teachers) but they tell a tale of personal memory, and this is its significance for the narrator and for the researcher.

The third limitation, the great difference between the respondents and the consequent difficulty in making generalisations: the respondents represent their own personal data, a wide and varied range of phenomena of learning disabilities; learning disabilities mentioned included: dysgraphia, dyscalculia, attention impairments, short-term memory difficulties etc. The research can tell us about the personal-professional story and coping strategies of the three teachers, but cannot tell a comprehensive and generalised story of the coping strategies of a similar population.

The fourth limitation, the research tool and duplication of its findings: whether any other researcher, experienced in the analysis of autobiographic stories, would reach a similar presentation of the findings and conclusions? Or in other words, whether the interpretation of the data and turning them into findings, could be reproduced and would lead to similar results in the hands of another researcher. I will refer to this fourth limitation at the end of my summary before the conclusion.

The fifth limitation relates to the fact that the research was conducted entirely in Hebrew but translated into English. As a result some of the content and cultural context of the data might be distorted. Some of the idioms, slang expressions and

nuances are difficult to transfer from language to language and can hardly '*live and breath'* by themselves.

## 4. Findings

This chapter presents the research findings as they were obtained from three sources of data: the autobiographical interview, the reflective feedback of the teacher regarding her lesson and her description of an educational event from her work. These three sources provide data concerning the teacher's personal experience and her memories from the past; they express the professional knowledge and values of the teacher. All the texts received were divided into stories and numbered. **A** indicates a story within the autobiographic interview; **R** indicates a story within the reflective feedback and description of educational events. The analysis relates to parts of the story, to the chronological sequence, breaks in the sequence, and repetitions within the story, the narrator's attitude towards the other figures in the story, and the meaning of metaphors and images. All these enable an understanding of the intra-personal self and the inter-personal self of the narrator. From the reflective feedback, additional findings regarding the narrator's professional knowledge are obtained such as: knowledge regarding pedagogic content, knowledge regarding didactic content, reading of the class map and use of reasoned pedagogic generalizations. In the presentation of the findings I tell the story of the teacher as it was reflected from the analysis and my interpretation which are subject to the rules and methods of analysis presented in the Methodology chapter.

 The findings for each teacher are presented separately. First biographical details of the teacher and her path of studies are detailed, and next there is an analysis of the autobiographical interview, an analysis of the reflective feedback and a description of an educational event. The common points among the three sources of data are then presented jointly. The main finding that characterizes the narratives of each teacher is the sentence or concept that passes like a silken thread through all three sources of data. This thread is referred to as 'figurative positioning'. These are the main findings that were obtained regarding the three teachers:

**Tamar:** the importance of proper order and organization that was interpreted as equating to fairness. As a child she is disappointed by teachers who did not teach in school and sent the child home to study alone – 'what is school for? It's superfluous!'

As a teacher she ensures proper organization of the knowledge for her pupils and maintains a timetable that allows maximum fairness for each pupil.

**Mira:** emphasizes the need to know and to recognize the "problem" and to act in accordance with this knowledge.  As a child, from an early age they knew that she had a problem, but the action taken did not produce the desired result.  As a young woman she decides she must 'know exactly what I had.' She undergoes a didactic assessment which results in a diagnosis and as a consequence she chooses action that changes her life.

**Noa:** the teacher's love is a condition for the pupil's success.  As a girl she felt that she was not liked by two of her teachers and she sees this as a reason for failure.  As a teacher she points to love for the pupil as an explanation for her professional actions in the classroom.

## 4.1 Analysis of the Autobiographical Interview – Tamar's Story

Tamar is the oldest daughter in the family and she has a younger brother and a younger sister. She is 27 years old, married without children and this is her second year of teaching in a primary school in the north of Israel.  Tamar teaches sciences and mathematics in Years 4, 5, and 6 and she is a qualified teacher for the sciences with a first academic degree in education. Tamar studied at a primary school in her residential neighborhood.  When she was 12 years old the family moved to another town and there she studied at the regional secondary school, where she completed her Matriculation and also a degree in architectural engineering (two additional years of study – Years 13 and 14).  She served for two years in the army, which she describes as a wonderful period of her life.  After this she worked for several months and saved money and then went for a world tour, which lasted for almost two years.  When she

returned from this trip, she deliberated with regard to the continuation of her path and in the end decided to study science teaching. Her studies lasted 3 years (instead of 4) because she was an engineer. <span style="color:green">The next paragraphs will deal with the categories that emerged from the autobiographical story (stage 3 and stage 4).</span>

Tamar lies out her life story; at first in brief and with much abbreviation then she returns to different periods of her life and describes them in detail, while focusing on problems that she experienced which she sees as central. The subjects which emerge from her autobiographic story included consideration of: her special personal characteristics and skills (stories A1, 2, 5, 12, 13, 14, 20, and 21); her memories from her studies in primary school and secondary school (stories 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 19 and 20), her deliberations regarding her choice of a profession and the decision to study science teaching (stories 5, 6 and 15); the college studies and the beginning of her work as a teacher (stories 7, 8, 23 and 24); the revelation of her learning disability, her feelings and coping strategies (stories 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23 and 24).

**4.1.1 Tamar presents herself** (A1; A2) in her childhood as a *'diligent person'*, – *'a person who kept to myself,. 'not particularly sociable', 'I kept very much to my own corner'*; whose life centred on reading books and going to the sea. The need of the girl to be *'always ready and organised'* or *'it was all right a very ordered day'* (stories A10 and A11) changes for the adolescent girl. She 'wouldn't go into a lesson that she did not like and felt that she didn't need it. She would go to the den where there were all those who used hashish and didn't learn and sat with them. Tamar stopped reading and developed other areas of her life *'I was a rock fan, a 'rocker', I wrote and played on a guitar'*. She writes poems, stories (two books) and paints a lot. <span style="color:green">The analyses of the categories include two stages from the procedure (stage 3 and 4).</span>

**4.1.2 Teachers who influenced Tamar** (A9; A12; A15; A7) Tamar mentions experiences from her childhood and describe the teachers at primary school. *'Those old teachers', 'Exhausted in character','lacking good contact with the pupils 'Were unable to laugh at a child's joke'*. She sees herself *'always ready and organised'* and knows how to answer *'any question asked in order to snare me', 'it was an enjoyable feeling that I could do what I wanted, whatever I fancied'*. She remembers teachers that she valued a lot and describes the engineering teacher: *'his eyes shine, he has a*

*good soul'.* It was he who gave her the idea *'to combine two professions: one for the soul and the second for an income'.* The spiritual richness and the wealth of the young woman's skills become clearer and are sharpened. Tamar's studies at college and remembers: *'I could choose courses . . . just to widen horizons, I had three wonderful years'.* Two lecturers who had a significant influence on her are mentioned and she explains what she learnt from them: ' *I learnt how important personal consideration is, how to make contact with a pupil so that he could turn to me when he felt it necessary. I* learnt how to listen, to solve problems, to maintain rules and to manage a class'.

**4.1.3 Choosing to be a Teacher** (A5; A6) Tamar explains in detail her dilemma before deciding about her profession. She spreads her deliberations concerning her choice of profession like a fan. She identifies her skills and weaknesses, her desires and wishes. She wants to provide a response to her mental and material needs: *'engineering is good money but my spirit was not in it', 'art was for myself, I painted from my soul, but not in order to be an art teacher', 'I thought about special education ... If I see a child cry I immediately cry with him and it is really not fitting to approach him with pity', 'as a child I had wanted to be a judge ...', 'a judge sends a criminal to prison and does not influence him ...', 'a teacher throws the child a fitting word, it could influence him and cause a change'.*

The story gives expression to Tamar's idealistic world. She draws a comparison between the judge and the teacher and uses the metaphor *'a teacher throws a fitting word to a child'* thus posing education and teaching as a factor that may, perhaps have an influence and cause a change in society, and she therefore chooses teaching as a profession. Tamar describes the influence of her college teacher on her choice of science and technology teaching, she explains why this field is very appropriate for her:' *this was a very interesting field, varied, renewing', 'I need a lot of change'.*

**4.1.4 The discovery of her learning disabilities (a retrospective glance)** (A16; A17; A18; A19; A20; A21; A22; A23; A24) Tamar rolls out the story with much emotion using linguistic means that give the reader the impression that he is witness to a real drama taking place before his eyes. She tells about the revelation of the learning disability and describes the identification of the problem and the young woman's difficulties and the efforts that she invests to treat the problem.

Tamar relates: *'from a very early age I discerned that I had certain problems'*. As a young girl in Year 7 she saw that her father and her brother and sister also had a problem. She herself *'uses greater effort than others to reach the same results'*. Despite her high marks she had many spelling mistakes. *'That was illogical'* – Tamar searches for good order, for logic and does not find it. She takes an exercise book from her brother (who is 3 years younger that her) and sees that his exercise book is also full of *'a lot of mistakes and the writing was not good'*. She invites him to come and read a book. Tamar reads one page and asks him to read after her. She notices that ' *he said the words but didn't really read'*. He tells her *'the words jump about for me'*. Tamar understands that they have a similar but not identical problem, the words do not *'jump about'* for her but her handwriting is *'terrible like his'*.

Here the story is told in the form of a dialogue between the mother and daughter. It is obvious that Tamar is very emotional when she recollects the event and fills the two roles: the role of the young girl who identifies the problem and explains it to her mother and also the role of the mother who is surprised and shocked by this revelation. Tamar explains to her mother: *'He could not read, the words jump about for him', He knows it by heart'*. The mother is astounded: *'What do you mean, the words jump around for him?'* Tamar again explains *'He knows it by heart but he can't read'*. The mother asks how she discovered that and Tamar explains that they both have *'terrible handwriting and many spelling mistakes'*. The mother who examined Tamar's exercise books when she was younger believed that it was natural for children to write with mistakes. She describes her difficulty as a child who has handwriting that is not nice and that she was ashamed of, and the spelling mistakes she makes. She invests much effort until she declares: *'Today I can write without mistakes'*. Tamar provides an explanation for her disability and a means to correct it: *'I need my mind to think while writing', 'I see the words as they are written in a book, but it is slower'*. She describes the way in which the whole family worked together.' *we took blank pages and wrote words where there were mistakes'* and they ' *repeated the words that we had already corrected and we enhanced their memory'*. The fact that Tamar was a *'bookworm'* helped her a lot.

Tamar describes her feeling – centring on a sense of shame. She describes how she wanted to hide her handwriting and spelling mistakes and how they harmed the social aspect of her life as an adolescent. She wants to overcome the problem that she has. She wonders *'What, am I stupid?'*, *'Am I retarded?'* and then she turns to her friends – the books: *' I read, I researched, I understood that this was genetic. No-one was guilty, it was simply genetic.'* Tamar invests many efforts: *'In class I would write fast and at home I would copy and correct it so that I would have a good looking exercise book to give to the teacher.'*

She declared *'it is a feeling of victory!!! It built who I am'*. Tamar is very satisfied with the way in which she looked after the problem. The great shame is replaced by construction, creation. *'It built me into what I am today, my curiosity',* *' if I have a problem I search until I have a sufficient answer'*. Tamar describes how she overcame the shame and learnt to ask for help. She again asks herself: *'Does the disability help me?'* *'Perhaps because of it I am a good artist?'* She still struggles with her spelling mistakes but she feels that this is under control. For the first time she mentions the stigma that people with spelling mistakes have and tries to prevent a situation in which she will be less valued because of them. Tamar hints at her fears in the past, that she would write with mistakes in front of her pupils. She quickly dismisses this fear relying on the characteristic that typifies her – her diligence. *'I just need to work a little harder and then there is no problem',* *'every problem has a solution'*.

**4.1.5 The importance of order and logic** (A16; A9; A10; A11) Tamar searches for good order, for logic and does not find it. She uses three times the expression *'illogical'* thus emphasising her distress in light of this lack of logic that a girl who reads a lot and writes, has so many spelling mistakes. She complains that *'for the holiday they would give us a half a mathematics book to do by ourselves, all that we hadn't learnt, because they didn't manage to finish, they gave us to do at home'. 'All the Passover holiday I sat and studied half a mathematics book and half a book of Hebrew'*. In order to express her protest and anger she says *'Unacceptable! Are you teaching or sending the children to study by themselves!'* and she sums up *'Lousy'*.

Tamar describes how the parents helped her with her studies: *'Mother taught me English and mathematics, father taught me Bible studies and they both taught me*

*Hebrew'.* A regular daily schedule that helped her a lot is mentioned four times ' *I had a very well organised daily routine during the holidays', ' everything was done in its own time and place', what I didn't know was explained to me even at the sea', ' it was fair because there was a time for everything', 'I relied on that order, it helped me'.* There is no doubt that keeping to the timetables and the regular and organised daily schedule takes on a significance of fairness (it was fair). She uses the metaphor: *'the teachers dropped it on the parents'* gives expression to the girl's protest concerning the disturbance of order. The teachers who didn't teach in class, *'dropped it on the parents'* to teach the girl. *Instead of learning during the studies they sent the children to learn during their holiday.* The correct, regular order, contributes to a sense of stability and balance for the girl, disturbance of this order causes anger and criticism towards the teachers.

## 4.2 Analysis of Tamar's Feedback regarding the Lesson

The lesson took place in the laboratory class. The subject of the lesson was the heartbeat rate. The observation took place in the Year 6 science lesson. There were 36 pupils in the class. The teacher welcomed the pupils as they enter the class, some of them arrived before the bell and others arrived immediately after the bell. The teacher writes the subject of the lesson on the board and invites the pupils to organise themselves for the lesson, to take out a pen and exercise book and she meanwhile writes the process of the experiment conducted the previous day on the board and the pupils copy from the board. After a few minutes five pupils who had been working as zebra crossing monitors entered the class. They look for their places; ask what they have to do. With the help of some of the other pupils the teacher repeats the activities that have taken place until this stage.

The teacher waits for silence, achieves it and continues to teach. There is a discussion following the experiment that took place the day before – examination of the pulse and listening to heartbeats – before and after the exertion of effort (the pupils examined these indices before and after running). The teacher writes the results of the experiment obtained by the pupils' examination on the board and the pupils copy from

the board.  While they are doing this the teacher takes care of a behaviour disturbance by several pupils – one of them gets her permission to go out and get some fresh air, another is allowed to feed the budgerigar and then returns to his place.  The teacher leans on the desk of one of the pupils, exchanges a few quiet words with him and moves his satchel to clear a path between the desks.  The teacher shows a slide on the board presenting a problem-story.  Several pupils read out loud in front of the class. After the slide is shown there are a few questions.

The teacher ensures that the pupils have understood with the help of an explanation provided by some of the pupils.  The questions provided for homework are thought-provoking questions and in the next lesson (a day or two later) the pupils can report the answers they have reached. At the end of the lesson, the teacher gives examinations back to the pupils.  She calls each one by name and gives them their exams. The pupils are agitated; some of them ask her to alter their grades.  The pupils take their satchels and go to another classroom where they will learn their next lesson.

Following the lesson, a reflective conversation took place and is analyzed here according to the leading themes (stages 3, 4 and 5): Tamar introduces her professional self (story R1, R3, R7, R12) she explains her teaching attitude, skills and plans (R2, R4, R8, R10, R11) and  describes  pupils with special needs in her class (R1, R5, R9, R11)

**4.2.1 Tamar's professional self (**R1, R3, R7, R12) She presents herself as someone who *'like(s) to be punctua*l' and for whom *'every minute of the lesson is important'*, however, the teacher has to cope with the late arrival of some pupils, which she sees as legitimate since they were on traffic duty and arrived at the lesson when their duty ended.

The teacher adapts herself to the situation that was created and repeats the first part of the lesson with the help of some pupils.  The teacher provides a reasoned explanation for her action, *'the double repetition helps'*.  Despite the difficulty caused by the behaviour of three pupils who take Ritalin at the beginning of the day, the teacher shows much empathy towards them.  She says: *'I've gone through the process with*

*them; it took time till they calmed down'.* She determines: *'It can't be helped'*, *'The teacher in the next lesson profits'.* It seems that the statement *'each minute of the lesson is important to me'* and the statement *'gone through the process with them'* constitute the figurative-organising position of the story demonstrating that the teacher stands between these two duties – planning the lesson in an effective manner and her commitment to the pupils with special needs.

The teacher describes processes relating to her. She twice uses the metaphor '*on calm waters'*, once as a metaphor for her feelings during the first hour and the second time as a metaphor for the first hour itself. She adds the image *'as at dusk'*. *'Dusk'* indicates the transition from day to night. Here its use indicates the opposite transition from night to day, from calm to activeness. *'The energizer bunny that had too many batteries pushed into him';* the *'Energizer bunny'* is a symbol of energetic activity. *'Had too many batteries pushed into him'* perhaps signifies not just energetic activity but rather hyper-activity (and indeed for some hours of the day the teacher sees herself as such). The metaphor: *I feel less pressed'* is a figurative positioning that summarizes the teacher's situation and feeling during this year – ranging between '*on calm waters'* to *'the Energizer bunny'.*

The teacher talks about her path to improve her teaching. As a professional teacher she repeats the same lesson in several classes and she describes the way in which she examines her lessons, marking *'certain comments'* for herself that she can alter in the next classes. She obviously wishes to realise her potential *'to achieve the best lesson that I can provide*.' She sees the advantage of a professional teacher, in that she is able to go back and correct things in order to reach the best standard that she can.

The teacher considers how it would be correct to intervene in the relations between pupils. She declares '*it is my difficulty'* and describes the sources of assistance to which she has turned: counsellors and literature, but she has not reached a satisfying answer. She has many question marks and she repeats the same expressions showing that the teacher is telling a story with much emotional power for her. She is '*still deliberating how to react*?', *'how is it correct to intervene*?', *'how would it be correct to react?'*, *'whether to stop the lesson?'*, *'I'm deliberate a lot'*, *'don't know how to react properly'*, *'the matter worried me'*, *' should I stop the lesson'* and deal only with this

subject? These are questions that the teacher asks herself when she faces an educational dilemma:- a pupil made hurtful and insulting remarks towards one of the girls – the teacher does not know what should be the suitable treatment for the incident, however she declares two goals that are important to her, the first: *'I want each pupil to feel secure in my lesson, at least that',* and the second*: 'I want them to know that they have an address[to turn to]'.* In practice the teacher went up to the pupil and told him quietly*: 'I don't allow you to act this way in my lesson, and it passed'.* The teacher is worried by the violent reactions of the children, by the fact that they put a ban on a girl and with regard to her ability to ensure a safe place for each pupil in her lesson. It seems that the gap between her clear declared educational goals and her available educational means creates tension and difficulty for the novice teacher.

**4.2.2 Tamar's teaching attitude, skills and plans (**R2, R4, R8, R10, R11) Firstly, she describes her pupils. She describes them as '*attentive*' pupils who *'took an interest'*, who are *'fascinated' and 'curious'* with regard to the studied subject and they *'suddenly discover and understand'.* Later the teacher describes her work method and how she plans the teaching. Helped by the metaphor *'something has already settled in their heads'* – which describes the way in which the teacher presents a certain subject and sends the pupils to think and deliberate about it so that they can learn the subject (only after one or two days) in the next lesson. Tamar likes *'to prepare them for the next stage, to know the next step'.* At the beginning of each month the teacher presents the subjects that they will learn during the month. At its end they examine how much of the plan they have completed. Three times the teacher mentions that knowing the plans and expectations helps the pupils (it is obvious that this matter is important for her). *'To know the next step'* expresses the teacher's desire and need to be a clearly understood teacher for her pupils. For the pupils it is also better to learn when they 'know exactly what is expected from them'. *'Something has already settled in their heads'* is a sort of expression for a respectful dialogue between the teacher and her pupils. She plans and notifies them. The pupils from their side understand what is expected from them in order to answer the expectations and they contribute their part.

Tamar describes the type of learning activity that took place in the lesson. She enumerates 5-6 different types of activity – this indicates the great variety of teaching methods used during one lesson. A discussion takes place, an examination of the results of an experiment, deducing conclusions, copying from the board, reading text and asking clarifying questions. The activity of copying from the boards brings us to the following story: The teacher explains that the copying from the board seems to her to be *'a waste of time'* so she prefers to give the pupils a typed page.

The teacher describes these pupils as *'very serious'*, *'very attentive'*, with initiative and as taking the subject very seriously (the teacher describes their initiative during an experiment – they turned to pupils from another class who had completed their run and examined their pulses and listened with a stethoscope to their heartbeats). Tamar is able to act according to the class mapping. The class mapping: ' *When they go outside there are pupils who are less attentive and see it as leisure and there are pupils who take it very seriously and others who are in the middle.'* She plans in advance *'So I give 15 minutes for the experiment and that's enough'*. The teacher gives a high level of attention to the pupils, she uses the metaphor: *'go home with questions'*. The word '*questions*' is repeated three times and thus emphasises its importance and centrality in the relationship between the teacher and her pupils. Go home with questions'. *'They send me questions by e-mail'*, *'I will have a lot of questions (in the mail), and they solve the questions outside the classroom'*.

The figurative positioning of the metaphor – 'go home with questions' testifies to the mutuality relationships between the teacher and her pupils and the territories within which the learning takes place. The relationship begins in a lesson and continues to the pupil's home. The questions go with the pupil to his home. He sends the questions to the teacher's home and she replies to him (virtually). The pupils 'search by themselves on the Internet', 'they solve the questions outside the classroom', this shows the pupils' ability to be independent learners and they are greatly rewarded by this method of teaching. Going home with the questions, offers a special intimacy between the pupils and their teacher. They 'arrive' at their homes with their questions and solve the questions in the special territory called *'outside the classroom'*

The story's coda (R8): *'Until they reach the next lesson they have already learnt by themselves with the help of the Internet, far beyond the level required in class'*.

Tamar talks about her attitudes regarding teaching and achievements. She uses the metaphor: *'it's worth aspiring upwards then you achieve more'*. She illustrates this attitude with an example that she brings perversely from the weaker pupils who ask wise questions. She decides that the *'teacher can never achieve everything, so it's preferable to ask and plan for a higher level and then the results of the entire class will be higher'*. This statement joins the previous statements (R2, R7) which show us that *'aspiring upwards'* is important to the teacher in relation to herself as a professional interested in gaining achievements (her own as a good teacher) and thus to guide her pupils to achieve. And in her words *'the pupils are able to comply with high requirements'*.

The teacher tells us about the wide variety of assessments that she allows the pupils as American questionnaire, oral questions or questionnaires in English – 4 pupils who are not yet fluent in Hebrew – and workbooks in English. The sentence *'Because I don't need to test their handwriting, only their knowledge'* reflects her principled attitude, and this follows her detailed description of how her principled attitude is translated into practice. It is obvious that the assessment of a pupil – who finds it difficult to write – with a low evaluation, while she, the teacher knows that his knowledge is far higher – causes her to become angry, frustrated and distressed: *'you don't need to be a genius'* in order to understand this and to enable the teacher to make a fair assessment for each pupil.

**4.2.3 Tamar describes pupils with special needs in her class** (R1, R5, R9, R11)
They read it and mark it with a felt-tip pen, instead of writing. The metaphor *'places them in a bad position'* describes pupils who have difficulty with writing and how they feel following the pressure that they experience, on the one hand the difficulty that they have to write quickly, while on the other hand the class waits for them and urges them on. It can be understood that the teacher does not feel that it is beneficial to *'place'* these pupils in a *'bad position'*. Her decisive conclusion: *'it's superfluous'*. Later in this story relating to the copying from the board that indicates her sensitivity to pupils with writing difficulty, the teacher describes other types of difficulties that pupils have – she uses the metaphor that the *'pupils sailed away to all sorts of places'*. The teacher is aware of the gaps between the pupils and she adapts an appropriate programme for them. The metaphor *'sailed away to all sorts of places'* hints that they

are not together with the class, they are on another voyage. The explanation for the difficulty of these pupils ' *they work with a personal workbook – I give them special activities that are appropriate for them'* demonstrates that the teacher equips them for their *'voyage'* and thus she is a supportive partner for their *'voyage'*.

In order that the teacher can prepare a personal programme for an underachievement pupil and to examine him accordingly, she needs the parents' permission. *'But his mother does not permit'* it testifies to the teachers' critical attitude towards the child's parents, and her difficulty to reveal empathy towards them. In this case, the parents constitute the obstacle in the teacher's path to advance the pupil. Tamar shows the immense responsibility that she demonstrates towards her pupils with difficulties and her willingness to devote her time to them in order to advance them. Unconsciously, the teacher positions herself with much commitment while the parents hold back and interfere with their children's progress. [5]

The teacher returns to describe the pupil who has difficulties who comes to her home to receive assistance. She provides the help for him without payment *'he doesn't come from a family that can pay'*. This help she provides in addition to the help that he receives from the teacher during his hours in school[6]

In order to describe the state of the pupil, the teacher uses the popular expression: *'sits on 30'*, his progress is described *'with me will already reach 70'*. The figurative positioning of the metaphor: *'his strong desire will conquer'* emphasises the pupil's strong will as a very central 'player' in the drama that takes place before our eyes. The special help of the teacher both in and outside the school testifies that the teacher is a very professional person with strong values and thus she gains our sympathy. However, the pupil's *'strong desire'* is positioned at the core of this drama, for without it, no drama would take place. A pupil who *'sits on 30'* is considered by his teachers to be a *'lost case'*. The teacher with whom he will *'already reach 70'* will still be required to continue to prove that this is not done by deceit, as in copying an exam.

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[5]More evidence in R6 and R11 – see Appendix 1(Tamar)

[6] Two weekly hours in which the teacher – any teacher – is in school without teaching a class and is available for a meeting with parents or to help pupils who need assistance

**4.2.4 In summary of Tamar's reflective feedback**:

The narrative analysis of the teacher's reflective feedback for the lesson that she taught, shows that:

1. The teacher, even if she is a teacher at the beginning of her career, uses many, varied teaching skills: She often uses reasoned rules, understanding of the class map, flexibility and educative actions in accord with changing situations, empathy for pupils, adapts educational tasks to the pupil's ability, sets clear limits for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and a wide variety of educational activities.

2. The teacher exhibits much sensitivity to the needs of the pupils with special needs. She does not complain about the 'difficulty' that they experience. She recognises their difficulty and *'goes through the process with them'*. The teacher explains the teaching methods that she uses in order not *'to put them in a position that is not good' and if they 'sail away'* she gives them learning means which will enable them to sail off to their desires horizons. This is a science teacher who has not undergone training for special education, so that it is interesting to identify the sources from which she draws her knowledge and sensitivity in order to provide a safe place for each pupil.

3. Her hidden criticism concerning parents and her initiatives to assist the pupils, may perhaps express the teacher's concern, high values and diligence, personal characteristics that appear also in her autobiographic story.

4. The teacher acts in a space between two commitments which apparently contradict one another. On the one hand – a commitment to carefully exploit the time. A commitment to the learning programme and the pupils' success and enabling them to reach high achievements. On the other hand a commitment to advance **all** the pupils, to provide them with a safe environment and to provide them with an address to turn to. In order to comply successfully with these apparently contradictory commitments, it seems that the teacher uses her professional knowledge that she draws from her personal experience and events from her past which have been engraved in her memory.

## 4.3 Tamar's Autobiographic Story and the Reflective Feedback

This section combines the categories from the autobiographic story (A) and the categories from the reflective feedback (R) (stage 5 and 6). A summary is created which links the account of the personal-self to that of the professional-self (stage 8) Tamar's feedback regarding the lesson that she taught, testifies to her amassed professional knowledge, apparently theoretical information that she acquired during her teacher training. Although Tamar did not study teaching in a special education setting, her sensitivity to the needs of pupils with special needs is obvious. Did she derive this information from her reservoir of personal memories? Where are the interface points between her personal story and professional knowledge?

**4.3.1 The importance of order -** As a child, Tamar had difficulty functioning when her order was disrupted. The importance of proper order is interpreted as fairness *'it's fair'* while a disruption of order evokes anger and protest and destabilizes her confidence and her good feeling (A10, A11). As a teacher, Tamar likes to be punctual, to inform the pupils about a programme they are about to learn and to examine their compliance with the timetable together with them (R1, R2). It seems that there is a repetition of her childhood experience here and application of knowledge from her personal experiences to her professional behaviour.

**4.3.2 The Teacher's Influence on the Pupils -** Tamar describes teachers who have influenced her path. She stresses the human and professional components which influenced her. As a child she really did not like the teacher who asked her questions *'in order to snare me'* and certainly not the *'exhausted teachers'* *'who didn't flow with the children'* and *'don't know how to laugh at a child's joke'.*

As a teacher, Tamar poses clear requirements to her pupils and especially fair ones, in other words the child knows what is expected from him and is therefore able to succeed. She carries with her the memory of the teacher whose *'eyes shine and he has a good soul'.*

When Tamar is deliberating how to act with pupils who use verbal violence and emotionally harm other pupils – she notes that it is important for her to constitute an address for pupils exactly as she describes what she learnt from the teachers that she

respected in the college: *'to make contact with a pupil so that he could turn to me when he felt it necessary'.*

**4.3.3 The Learning Disability-** Tamar is the one who identified her own learning disability. She reports that from a young age she knew that she had some *'sort of problem' 'writing was not nice and I had spelling mistakes'.* She describes the shame that she felt in front of her friends the pupils and her teachers and how she avoided activities that might 'expose her', how she could not send a greeting to a child in order not to expose clumsy handwriting. While in secondary school she copied from her exercise books in order to present a copybook with fewer mistakes and less awkward script to the teacher.

As a teacher Tamar prefers to provide her pupils with a typed sheet and instead of writing she gives them the possibility of marking the correct answer with a felt tip pen. It is important for her to avoid situations in which some of her pupils will be *'placed in a situation which is not good',* a place in which they would be liable to expose their writing difficulties.

As a very intelligent child, often, the lessons were not interesting for her and she wanted to be left alone with her books and painting. As a teacher she feels much responsibility to provide interest for each of her pupils, at the highest level and at the lowest level. It seems that Tamar's personal beliefs – that when there is a problem a means must be found to solve it and that each difficulty has a response – guide her not only with regard to herself but also with regard to her pupils. She feels much commitment to help a very weak pupil and especially when his determination 'reminds' her of her own determination. The personal 'scars' of the teacher greatly sharpen her sensitivity to the pupils' 'scars'. Her personal characteristics – diligence, perseverance, commitment and curiosity – make her sensitive and open to identify these exact characteristics in her pupils.

## 4.4. Analysis of the Autobiographical Interview - Noa's story

Noa is a young teacher, she is married and the mother of a child and this is her second year of teaching. Three years ago she completed her studies in a teacher training college. She has an academic degree and is an authorised teacher for special education. She finished high school with Matriculation; her level was that of an average pupil, although throughout her studies difficulties were revealed concerning mathematics. After high school she was enlisted into the army. She served for two years and afterwards improved her Matriculation grades (mathematics) and with a complete Matriculation certificate applied for acceptance to the college. She passed the threshold examination with a grade of 79 (a grade of 80 was required for acceptance), she was accepted by the college and required to add one course and began her studies in the special education stream in accord with her aspirations. In the first year of her studies in the college she underwent a didactic diagnosis and was informed for the first time that she had a learning disability (dyscalculation and attention and concentration disability). The results of the diagnosis were a difficult experience for her and aroused serious deliberations, whether to continue her studies at the college or to cease them. Noa decided that she would 'fight' and continue. She succeeded in completing her studies and began to work as a teacher in primary school classes, at first as a replacement teacher and later as a teacher for integrated pupils (who receive additional educational help) and in the present year as a nursery teacher. The autobiographical interview with Noa includes a number of stories. Some of the stories repeat themselves in different versions describing the narrator's personal emotional experiences with increasing power. Other stories present her personal-professional conclusions and her belief in her.

The subjects presented in the interview are: painful memories of her experiences with mathematics teachers (A1, A6, A8, and A12). Difficulties in daily life concerning subjects connected with mathematics (A2, A7). The didactic diagnosis and coping with the results (A3, A4 and A5). Experiences of failures and success in her studies (A4, A5 and A9). Belief' and lack of belief' in her own abilities (A10, A11).

**4.4.1 Noa presents herself** - In the beginning of the interview Noa presents (A1) the period of her studies as a pupil in primary school and high school. She demonstrates

and says *'the teacher really did not like me'* and her experiences with another teacher *'that I really didn't get on with'*. The expression *'and that's how things with mathematics rolled on'* is a metaphor for a progressing action, something that occurs without the narrator being able to control it: the teacher does not like her, her brothers prepared her homework for her and she remained in a passive state.

The statement *'and since then I didn't enter that class'* in the second part of the story, reveals the narrator in a more active role, she determines her place and her steps. This figurative positioning demonstrates her position in the past as passive, while in the present - *'and since then I haven't entered the class'* – she has a more active status. Noa takes the responsibility upon herself; she initiates action and decides on her next steps. She reacts to the decision of her teacher who recommends that she should not take the final exams and says *'I didn't get on with him'*; *'I decided to stop'*. *'I stopped learning', ' I didn't go into class again'* – all these statements demonstrate the intentional actions of Noa. The multiple uses of verbs: got on, decided, stopped, entered, increases the sense of activity and intensiveness with which Noa describes her. She summarises her attitude in the past and in the present and signify a development in her consideration of her mathematical studies and the way in which she sees herself. In primary school she is passive and in high school she becomes active and in both cases she has an unpleasant experience with the mathematics teachers. During the interview Noa repeatedly relates to the same experiences and using examples that she pulls from her memory, describes events with those two teachers that illustrate the powerfulness of the painful experience and the offence that she has suffered and is still experiencing very intensely.

The narrator expresses her personal belief, a conclusion that she has arrived at through her personal experience, as it arises from the story of her life, and in accordance with her professional understanding: *'If you like the teacher you will also succeed in the discipline'*. This belief is repeated several times in different versions (A 12).

**4.4.2 Memories of her experiences with mathematics teachers** - Noa describes her difficulty in accomplishing mathematical actions concerning daily living: *'I knew that something inside of me was incomplete'* (A2). She doesn't understand the logic, she

does not understand what they want from her and this causes fear and hesitation. Outwardly she reports on the logic that is incomprehensible to her, while *'inside'* she feels that she is *'incomplete'*. This description returns in two additional places (A2, A7).

Noa surmises for herself and the listener (A6) that if the events that she is about to tell, had happened today they would have received a sharp reaction. Drastic action would be taken by the education system and by her parents in order to prevent the continuation of the teacher's work. This demonstrates the strength of the narrator's experience. Does the narrator want someone to be active and take action? The girl feels very alone when the teacher calls her derogatory names. Outwardly she was passive, but the strength of the experiences is obvious and emphasised when Noa repeats the derogatory name she was called twice. The witnesses to this event are also mentioned twice. Despite the desire of the narrator to prove herself to the teacher, she was so hurt, that she did not tell anyone about this and felt that *'it was stuck and amassed and amassed'*. This metaphor describes the state of the narrator as a child, like a container in which more and more things are collected, however there is no flow there, the things that are collected do not exit but they remain stuck. What collects in this container? Noa provides the details: humiliation before the entire class, a serious injury, difficulty in her studies, frustration regarding her studies, the feelings that she did not tell to anyone, food that she searched for and obesity. Having given expression to the very powerful emotional experience in the metaphor *'stuck and amassed and amassed'* she concludes her infuriated story: *' Then I discovered that I had amassed a lot of things inside me that I didn't need',* a sentence that represents the cognitive attitude of the narrator as an adult regarding her painful childhood experiences.

The figurative positioning of the expression above shows that in the past, at the first stage the narrator positions herself in a passive attitude regarding the event. At the second stage she is critical (a type of activism) and at the third stage it is possible to discern that the narrator asks for steps to be taken (an activist expression).

Towards the end of the interview the narrator 'returns' to that same teacher; this time in a slightly more philosophical tone and states her conclusion: (A12) *'She was so disparaging, I didn't have a chance',* and she positions this memory in her life's

weave: '*it influenced me all those years'*. The adult narrator expresses uncertainty regarding her, the child that was present at the event*: if the teacher said these things to you (the pupil) 'perhaps you are really like that'*. She uses the image *'like a snowball that continued to rol*l' (A12), in other words the narrator has no control over events. She seems to be submerged in innocent thoughts (totally naïve) of a child in Year 2 that believes that what the teacher says is correct, although it does not match her internal feelings.

Another metaphor describes a teacher *'she was so destructive'* (A 12), is an attempt to illustrate her internal experience of power as opposed to weakness; someone with strength and power who uses them to hurt those who are weaker than he is. The word 'destructive' hints at the activism of the one who destroys, this is the way of the destroyer, to repeatedly attack and destroy. In contrast there is the statement: *'I didn't have a chance'* that illustrates the Noa's passiveness that also emerged from previous stories, in light of the teacher's destructiveness. Although she progresses through the chronological sequence of her life story, she interrupts the sequence, goes backwards in time and talks about a memory from the period of junior high school, with the teacher that she has already mentioned at the beginning of the interview; demonstrating that for her this is an important memory that she does not wish to omit.

She describes two events (A8) that are very dramatically, really like a play taking place between two actors on the stage. The first event is summarised in one sentence that could also be the title for the story *'I made a break[7]*. Noa describes herself as full of motivation, *' to show everyone that I could'*. She uses the image '*I was again on the crest of the wave'* meaning above, in movement, progressing. In contrast is her consideration of the teacher, to whom she turns and talks in the second person, admonishing him: *'You didn't let me pass', ' You didn't give me the confidence that I could'. 'You didn't believe in me'* - when the teacher decided not to present her for the Matriculation. After a long silence, it is obvious that she relives the event very powerfully; she goes on to describe her feelings and actions. She reports a terrible feeling, of disappointment, complete failure, lacking any chance, and her conclusion is: '*whatever you do will not succeed'*. Despite all her actions she sits for hours with a

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[7] There is an idiom in Hebrew that means to break the rules

private teacher and spends a lot of money, all her paths do not succeed. She decides to make a break, to stop studying and not to go to the maths lessons. She *'was on the crest of the wave'* she had ascended onto *'the correct road'*; she was on a rising line and hoped to succeed, but the teacher's consideration of her causes her to have *'a terrible feeling, disappointment and complete failure'*. She was *'weary from the journey'* until she decided to *'make a break'*. The use of the image of the wave and the road emphasises movement and progress, while the image of making a break emphasises the split, destruction and anger.

Additional evidence of this is obtained from the description of the event that appears further on in the story, although it occurred several years later and which she summarises in a sentence *'he had scarred me so much'*. The teacher is described as a person who scarred her and the experience of shock and alarm are transferred to her friend who was witness to the event. The coda of the story, describes the meaning that the story has in the past and in the present such that it is the belief of Noa that *'when you like the teacher …and the teacher understands you and gives you the proper respect, you can succeed in everything, in any discipline'* …

**4.4.3 The didactic diagnosis and her studies in the college -** During her first year of studies in the college, Noa underwent a didactic diagnosis (A3). She describes the event as a traumatic experience: *'I received a blow' 'I was in shock'*. In order to illustrate the strength of the shock resulting from the diagnosis findings with which she was forced to cope, Noa uses the metaphor: *'suddenly a sort of dam burst'*. When the dam bursts, powerful feelings of pain arise, sadness, an experience of personal failure and the danger of a threat to the realization of her dream to be a special education teacher. The knowledge that something *'was not right with me'* and the repeated use of the expressions: difficult, very difficult, very, very difficult, do not leave any doubt regarding the strength of this experience. The storm of feeling caused by the *'dam burst'* ends with a painful experience: *'everything was so stuck'*. The pain that is *'stuck'* appears again in the description of the girl who was hurt by the teacher who used derogatory names against her (A6). While the young girl is described as passive, Noa the student is described as very active: *'I decided that I would fight'*, *'all the studies in the college were one big battle'*. This battle is waged with herself and with her learning environment. With herself, there is the difficulty to satisfy her

desire that *'everything needed to be perfect', to prove to them and to herself 'I can'* …
with her learning environment there is the need to catch up with learning tasks, to
invest much time in her studies. From the point of view of the sequence of her life
story, the encompassing image *'all the time at war'*, that she uses to describe herself in
her college studies, apparently reminds her of previous wars. She stops the
chronologic story and returns to the event that occurred while she was still a primary
school pupil (A6). She describes how it was difficult for her *'to understand this
logic'*.

It is only after she has presented her personal conclusion in the coda of another for
(A8) regarding the connection between a good teacher and the success of the pupil in
her studies that she finds time to describe the sense of success that she experienced in
her third year of studies in the college. *'There was pleasantness in the air'* (A9). In
contrast to the previous experiences, Noa describes how she felt when the pedagogic
tutor respected her and believed in her. The encouragement and support that she is
awarded instil something new in her – an experience of success. The excitement of
Noa is obvious in the tone of her voice and especially in the repeated use of
expressions that describe her feeling: *'there was pleasantness in the air' 'I was in the
clouds' 'an uplifting feeling of success' 'it was happiness, it was happiness'*.

It's possible that the feeling of failure and the unremitting battle empower this
experience of success and she sees this as '*victory*'. The sense of success, that is new
to the narrator, brings doubt regarding her belief in her ability to succeed as opposed
to certainty of her failures. The figurative positioning *'all that I carry on my back*
(A10), relates to the negative experiences from the past which are accessible and
easily arise from her memory. Noa returns enumerating them and talking about them:
*'something stopped in my heart' 'had a heavy feeling all the time' 'I felt I was
defective' 'difficult to recover'*. She finds herself in the present with painful
experiences from the past and apparently finds it difficult to provide a place for the
new experiences of success. What is new in the life of the narrator is her present life
experience, she *'finds it difficult to believe in good experiences'*, and she describes
them (A 11): *'this was my diving board', 'I realized a dream' 'an uplifting feeling' 'I
had realized my dream'*. The coda of the story is a comprehensive conclusion for her
life – *'it has an influence for all levels of my life'. 'If there is something that I want to*

*do I can always do it'?* It seems that the success is positioned in the present and as a direction of the future.

## 4.5 Analysis of Noa's Feedback regarding the Lesson

At first Noa describes her regular activity that takes place in the class every morning. She describes a number of activities in three areas: activity concerning the identification of the day of the week and coordination with the calendar. Another activity about the weather and a special table for this subject. Morning songs in which each pupil mentions his name and all the pupils participate in movement. When she describes her learning activity concerning the studied subject: the garden, the teacher explains that she has discerned that some of the pupils find it difficult to take an active part. She explains that this is because of the weight and the length of the lesson. An additional explanation given by the teacher is connected with the activity hour that takes place later than on a regular day. It is also obvious in the lesson and in the feedback conversation that the teacher is very aware of each pupil individually. She notes the progress of one of the girls, explains why she chose another pupil, and details her different demands from the pupils; this is all according to their personal needs. The teacher identifies the difficulty that the pupils have in play-acting the story and she says *'the pupils did not understand my intention completely'* … *'perhaps they were tired'* … She does not succeed in fully interpreting what there was in her directions that made it difficult for the children to understand her intention completely, and transfers the responsibility to a general factor such as tiredness over which she has no control. Noa relates to learning as a perpetual process in which the pupils each time accumulate additional knowledge, she describes this process in the learning to read their own names, learning personal independence, learning classroom behaviour, collecting and arranging toys and the knowledge about their vegetable garden. In all these areas, the teacher mentions the names of pupils and describes their progress or the difficulties that they have encountered.

**4.5.1 Educational Events from Noa's Work** - The teacher chooses to note two events connected with irregular behaviour of two pupils. One of the learning subjects

this year is the prevention of verbal violence. The teacher describes the actions that she has performed with all the pupils and with one of the pupils who in her opinion has a special problem regarding this subject. As a result of the complaints of pupils or on her initiative, the teacher invites the pupil who uses especially rude expressions, to a short individual meeting with her. She again goes over the "ceremony" with him in which they throw the unpleasant words into the rubbish bin. The teacher notices the gap between the pupil's "theoretical knowledge" and his ability to implement this knowledge at pertinent moments. Noa believes that many rehearsals will help the pupil to reach a level of higher control and this will help him to reduce verbal violence.

In an additional event the teacher describes a girl who had difficulty behaving according to the class rules and gathering toys at the end of playtime. Despite the positive feedbacks that she regularly uses in order to encourage the pupils to fulfil their tasks, today she chooses a different approach. Noa creates eye contact with the girl who is not collecting the toys and says: *'today you will not receive the table games'*. The pupil reacts by acting offended and crying. The teacher invites her to a conversation when she calms down she emphasises the pupil's maturity and ability to successfully perform the tasks required. The teacher explains me (the researcher) the importance of a personal relationship for each pupil and the importance of her encouragement believing that it can advance the pupil.

Last year, her first year in teaching, Noa worked as a replacement teacher in an Class two. She remembers this period as a period when she succeeded well as a teacher and she describes events from her work including explanations and reasons for her professional decisions. Now describes the pleasure she had helping pupils with difficulties, a special relationship with pupils and parents and eventually the sorrow at parting. She notes her sensitivity to the needs of pupils with difficulties: *'I felt that I knew well what to offer them'*. She gives details: *'I identified their specific difficulties, I made personal programmes for them and I found ways to make it easier for them'*. She finds it important to give the pupils easy and simple examinations after she has prepared them. There is a repeated mention of the desire to make things easier for the pupils which appears several times, and also the desire to prevent any superfluous difficulty for them. Noa herself links these professional decisions with her

experiences as a pupil: '*this is my personal trauma ... and I didn't want my pupils to have such an experience'. 'There's no chance that a child in (my) Class two, will feel like I felt as a pupil'.* In order that they should not feel that way Noa makes sure that '*each child should have an experience of success', 'that the studies will be fun', 'that there will be no stressful and threatening atmosphere', 'that they should not have unnecessary frustration'* ...

**4.5.2 Her Integration in the School and Coping with Her Learning Disability -**
The teacher went to the head-teacher before she began to teach and told her that she could not teach mathematics, she reports that no problem arose. The teacher of the parallel Class two taught mathematics to the two classes and she taught literature comprehension in the two classes. '*It was wonderful for me, its something that I am good at'* and she was awarded much esteem by the school head-teacher. Noa notes her difficulty with mathematics, '*even in my daily life simple things are very complicated for me'.* However this time the teacher notes that there is no problem. She feels very much at one with herself, she only teaches things that she is good at and will not teach things that she is not good at. And on the side of the school no problem arises. Her personal experience as a pupil is exposed as the very important motivation for her professional decisions as a teacher.

**4.5.3 Summary of Noa's reflective feedback**:
In her autobiographical story, Noa describes the experience of stress that she underwent at an early age and her feeling that the teacher did not relate to her properly. On this background it is possible to understand the importance of her statement: '*I feel that my consideration as a teacher for the child and the class experience is important, ensuring that there should not be a stressed and threatening atmosphere'.* It is obvious that the teacher's love for her pupil is a central theme that is expressed in all three sources from which the narratives were collected. In childhood and adolescence the teacher-pupil love relations, are loaded with disappointment, insult and anger. While in adulthood, as a teacher, the teacher-pupil love relations serve as a consideration in her pedagogic and didactic judgment. In the reflective feedback there is evidence of Noa's professional ability to read the class map well and to adapt her method of teaching accordingly. She uses explained rules and regulations. The teaching methods are varied and enable pupils to learn through audible, visual

and movement channels. She demonstrates empathy towards the pupils and especially for those who have difficulties. She knows how to adapt learning tasks to the level of difficulty in accordance with the pupil's progress.

## 4.6 Summary of the Analysis of Noa's Interview and Reflective Feedback – The Need for the Teacher's Love

Using the autobiographic interview we can become familiar with the inner intra-personal and interpersonal worlds of Noa. Her memories testify to her feelings and great sensitivity. From the outside it seems that all is well, but her sensitivity is directed towards the inner world – *'it was stuck and it amassed and amassed'*, *'I had amassed a lot of things inside me that I didn't need'*. From an early age she knows, *'something inside me was incomplete'*. She experiences a sense of impotency with regard to anything relating to numbers, calculations, money; the logic that is totally incomprehensible for her. The knowledge that something within her is incomplete increases the need for an experience of wholeness with the outside world, with her learning environment and with the teacher who represents this environment. The almost desperate need for the teacher's love for the pupil might provide an experience of wholeness or at least an illusion of wholeness. The girl wants to be loved by her teacher. The young woman wants to be valued and respected by her teacher. She conditions her expectations for success on their love for her, in other words on an experience of harmony and wholeness, as a recompense or replacement for her feeling *'inside me ... incomplete'*. Naturally, the teachers cannot fulfil this need and they are experienced as hostile, alienating, injurious, and destructive. It is possible that her disappointment regarding the teachers may represent a mirror image of the powerful inner experience that *'something inside me was incomplete'*. While she is a student in college, after the shock of the results of the diagnosis of a learning disability, *'I received a blow'*; *'I was in shock'*, *'suddenly a sort of dam burst'*. Noa does not search at this stage for the love of her teachers, instead she decided to fight. Her studies become the battlefield, *'one big battle all the time'*. It is perversely then, within these wars that she is finally enabled to enjoy a *'corrective experience'* and Noa's wish to be loved and respected by the teacher, occurs. The pedagogic tutor apparently 'speaks' to the incomplete, hurt part and thus soothes it, in other words soothes the student. Noa quotes the words of her pedagogic tutor from her memory, *'We shall find ways to*

*bypass the difficulties*', '*We shall find the ways for you to successfully catch up with what is necessary'*.   Then too the door was opened wide '*for an uplifting experience*' of success, '*there was pleasantness in the air'*, '*I was in the clouds*' as the student testifies regarding herself.

As a teacher Noa again emphasises the importance of the personal consideration that she provides for each pupil, including physical expression, a hug for 'good morning'. She explains that each pupil has different needs and prepares an appropriate question or task for the pupil.  The teacher's explanation, the reason for her decision, testifies to her professional knowledge, from her learning of theory in the field of education and teaching.  She explains the importance of teaching through illustration, differentiation of learning activities, use of repetitions and memorisation, adapting the amount of learning material and the level of difficulty to the concentration ability and understanding of the pupil.  Noa also mentions a different reason: '*so that the child won't feel as I did in Year 2'*, in other words her didactic and pedagogic consideration is also subject to the orders of the teacher's inner, intra-personal self, where her childhood memories are alive and active, those we have witnessed in the autobiographical interview. She is aware and tells us that her professional behaviour is guided by her personal memories; this is the place where she herself becomes the loving teacher, being pleasant to the child, supporting and encouraging the pupils. Noa the child wanted to be loved by her teachers, as an adult looking back at her past, she explains that this is the condition for the pupil's success, as a teacher she demonstrate 'maternal behaviour' as  part of her professional behaviour. She hugs and is hugged, sits on the floor with the children (even though she is in an advanced stage of pregnancy), or on a low chair so that she will be at eye level with the child.  She feels it is important for the child to experience success each day, '*that he should understand what I want from him'*.  She explains that she has given the pupils in Class 2 examinations which do not cause pressure or fear and some of which were transmitted as games so that the pupils would enjoy the very act of the game.

In answer to the research questions, it is possible to see the influence of the personal story and even to some extent its re-enactment, in the professional consideration of the teacher in the present.  Her past as a pupil with a learning disability, needing love

from her teachers in order to succeed, positions her need to be an understanding, loving and supporting teacher for her pupils, at the centre of her activity.

The figurative positioning, that returns in the autobiographic interview, in the reflective feedback and in the description of an educational event is: *'the pupil's success depends upon the teacher's love'.* Relying on the analysis of the metaphors, images and the form of the discussion with the teacher, we can see the sources of her personal-professional knowledge and how it is expressed in the teacher's considerations as she explains them in her reflective feedback and the description of an educational event.

Noa explains her choice to become a special education teacher, *'I think that I can also now have better understanding of a child who has difficulties because I have learning disabilities myself'.* (A5).

There is a gap between professional knowledge (academic-theoretic) and personal knowledge accumulated during childhood. The teacher learnt in a learning environment of special education about a learning disability called dyscalculia. During the autobiographic interview, she several times notes her experience as a pupil who did not understand questions concerning multiplication tables, or that Danny had 8 marbles, and how to give back change … (7a, 2a). However she does not connect her experiences of failure in her maths studies with the type of learning disability that she was diagnosed as having – dyscalculia. In other words, academic knowledge that she acquired during her professional training as a teacher does not cancel out or replace her personal experiential knowledge that she underwent during her studies in primary school and in secondary school. She has consolidated 'her truth', 'her personal-knowledge' and her value attitude that if she had had supportive loving teachers she would succeed in the discipline of maths. Three times during the interview she mentions the relationship between the teacher who loves respects and understands the pupil and the consequent ability of the pupil to succeed in any discipline. Moreover, towards the end of the autobiographic interview the interviewer raises the possibility:
*'Was it possible that you had a learning disability and that you had no chance of succeeding?'* Noa answers *'I didn't think about that'.* it seems for a moment that Noa

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is likely to think about this possibility, however, very rapidly she continues with the story with which she is familiar: *'but because she was so destructive, I didn't have a chance'* … in the reflective feedback regarding the lesson, the teacher again returns to this belief and describes to what extent it is important for her to make it easy for her pupils so that they won't experience what she underwent.  This consideration is guided by her personal knowledge fed by the teacher's intra-personal self.  Yet, when the teacher describes the personal programme that she knows how to adapt to the pupil with special needs, it is clear that her consideration is based on professional academic knowledge that she acquired when she was trained professionally.  It can be said that knowledge accumulated from her personal experience as a result of the processing of painful childhood memories, becomes knowledge that guides the teacher in her professional considerations. At the same time it combines with academic professional knowledge.  Often there is preference for one above the other and sometimes they are intertwined one with the other, professional theoretical knowledge and personal professional knowledge.

## 4.7 Analysis of the Autobiographical Interview – Mira's Story

Mira is 29 years old, and married. She lives in the rural settlement in which she was born and where she was educated for most of her years.  As a result of difficulties which appeared from the beginning of her studies, she was transferred to vocational studies and later to a high school for pupils with learning disabilities which she completed with a graduation certificate.  After her military service she asked to undergo a diagnosis which would indicate the nature of her difficulties. The diagnosis results indicated learning disabilities in the areas of dysgraphia and dyscalculia, attention difficulties and problems with short-term memory, and it was recommended that she turn to vocational training that would not require academic studies.  In opposition to the recommendations, Mira applied to a school for discharged soldiers and there she studied for her Matriculation exams which she passed successfully. Later she chose to study at a teacher training college and today she is a qualified as a special education teacher with a first academic degree in education.  At the time that the research took place Mira was at the end of her practicum year and worked as a

class teacher in a school for special education with children with moderate mental retardation living in a boarding school.

Through the analysis of the following narratives in Mira's autobiographical interview, it seems that the figurative positioning focuses on two motives interwoven throughout the story and inter-related one to the other: knowledge about a problem and action.

**4.7.1 Mira presents herself** – she provides biographical details about herself and her family (A1).  She makes a comprehensive declaration that embodies one of the most painful chapters of her life: *'They knew I had a problem but they did nothing about it'*. She presents the helpless girl facing anonymous people who do not do anything to solve the girl's problem. Here comes a description of her path of studies (A2, A3) first she begins with a group of her peers. She is given assistance in her studies for several years until Year eight and after that she transfers to studies in a vocational school outside the village where she grew up.  The expression *'I accumulated a gap'* appears three times and it explains her understanding the need to transfer to a vocational school.  The girl's work is the accumulation of gaps in the studies, she does not know who the people who decided to transfer her are, and in contrast to them she is passive.

The meeting with the pupils from the vocational school opens with a positive declaration and describes her good feeling about it. There are four expressions: *'at first it was fun'*, *'it was nice'*, *'it was fun'*, *'A burden was lifted from me'*.  She explains the reason for her good feeling: *'there were other pupils who also had all sorts of problems'*, *'I was equal to them'*, and *'the pressure in my studies was lessened'*. It seems that for the narrator the new placement put her on a more equal footing with the other pupils.  It was only at the beginning. During the story Mira mentions the difficulties at the previous school: *'I didn't succeed'* and adds her disappointment concerning the vocational school also *'I didn't reach anything there'*.  The positioning changes and she returns to being passive.  Words describing action are attributed to anonymous adults: *'they understood', 'they transferred', 'they decided'*, understood that the school was not good, decided and transferred the girl to another school.  Mira says *'I decided'* but immediately corrects herself: *'I didn't decide'*, this is still not the correct positioning for her.

Mira wonders *'who are these people?'* (A3) those who decide for her about an additional transfer to another school? Now contrastingly, for the first time she presents specific people, her mother's husband, who are involved in the decisions regarding the continuation of her studies. She becomes more active when she describes the new school from his point of view. With the help of five verbs the narrator gives the sense of action and involvement: he *'knew', 'had knowledge', 'thought', 'progress and action'.* Her ability to talk about him transfers the activeness to her, and seems that she feels now more active in her positioning.

Mira describes two situations in a negative style (A5), which indirectly indicates her involvement and activeness in two subjects which are important to her. First, the placement situation: *'sleeping outside the home ... I wasn't willing to hear about that'.* Apparently her decisive decision influenced the choice of the learning framework for her. Secondly, she describes the social situation with the assistance of four expressions. The first in a positive manner '*I always belonged to the group*' and three in a negative hierarchical manner: *'I didn't have a problem', 'It never failed me', 'I was never rejected'.*

As a researcher I wonder why Mira needs to use expressions with such a difficult weight when she describes the good experiences of her life. Even her good experience when she feels a member of a group. Are these hints of pain or anxiety because there might be the possibility of being rejected? Can she fail because of her learning situation? It seems that the intra-personal self of the narrator can be found between these two worlds.

When Mira describes her transfer to the special school for pupils with learning disabilities she positions herself in a more active way '*I finally understood that it was preferable for me to move to there'* although there is no obvious enthusiasm arising from the understanding that she has finally reached. However, the encounter with the school's pupils causes excitement, happiness and relief. A relief is found for the very worrying problem in her inner world – her being different from others. The sentence: '*At last I wasn't so special and different*' apparently answers some questions I mentioned before. A solution was found not only for belonging but also for being different. Belonging as someone different is accompanied by anxiety whether she

might not fail or perhaps be rejected. While belonging as an equal to her new friends who are described as being of high quality, '*they had really learning disabilities like me', they were really wonderful guys'* arouses the expressions: '*I felt very good there', 'It was great fun', 'I remained in contact with them'*.

After her military service she begins to work in order to earn money and goes for a trip around the world (A8). She leaves her village and joins some young people, with whom she works and with whom she travels to India.  She separates from a boyfriend with whom she had been together for three years; goes back home *'broken-hearted'* and in contrast to her expectations finds her place there. *And then when I returned home and everything calmed down, I decided that I would go and study'.* This sentence suggests the regular normative settling down of a young woman who comes home after a journey, relaxing and deciding that she wants to go to study.  She is at the end of one period and the threshold of a new stage.

**4.7.2 The didactic diagnosis -** It begins with a declaration (A9): *'I missed out an important part'* and indeed the narrator, who has already advanced along the events of her life, remembers that she has jumped over an important period. She goes back to the important episode, '*I decided to go for a diagnosis'* – the narrator is very active now – she indicates four actions that describe this: she decides, she tries to find out, she wants to know, and she wants to see. Even though it might be possible to understand from the previous stories that Mira knows what her problem (A6) is, it becomes clear that this concept "knowledge" is far more complex. She no longer suffices with the comprehensive term *'she's problematic'*, '*I'm a bit stupid but we'll manage*'.  She looks at herself from the present point of view backwards towards the past: *'my whole self esteem was very low'* and she tries to calm herself with the same way of thinking that apparently already belongs to the past *people manage with worse things than that, and I would too'* … this mood from the past in which the young woman apparently needs to recognize facts of life - she is stupid and there are other things worse than that.   . And indeed this is the point at which Mira begins the transformation in her life.  However, meanwhile we witness only her desire '*To know what I really have'.*  The positioning is active, she decides and she leads. In her inner world, the intra-personal there is evidence of a struggle between two different forces.

On the one hand the desire to know what she really has and on the other hand the knowledge that *'I am stupid'* and that she have to manage with that.

Mira describes (A10) her experience of the diagnosis: *'I left there completely shattered' 'I didn't understand what they wanted from me at all, the whole diagnosis was very frustrating. It lasted many hours. I was given all sorts of things to read and to make associations, to start to read English which was completely 'double-Dutch' for me, and wasn't suitable for me.'* The very fact of arriving for the diagnosis was apparently accompanied by fears and worries: *'I left there completely shattered, even more than when I went in'.* The metaphor used is of shattering, breaking up, of something that was complete and is no longer so. *'Even more than when I went in'* testifies that even before the diagnosis, in the experience of her inner world, the utensil was not complete. Mira is told the results of the diagnosis, including dysgraphia and dyscalculia, but from her point of view there are other things that are even more difficult, she hints at them but does not give details: *'and many other more severe things than that'.* The event arouses tension even in the present, this we learn from the form of the discussion. She goes on to use direct quotation. The tone of her voice changes, it is as though she is reliving the event and talks in the name of the person who tested her: *'You can't study for a first degree', ''You've got no chance of succeeding', 'It would be better if you went to learn a profession because it is the only way that you can fit in'.* In a swift passage from the decisiveness with which Mira described the words of the person who tested her, she goes on to examine the significance of the diagnosis results. It is as if she remembers the thoughts that accompanied her in the past *' there were lots of professions that don't need that sort of studies and that I would manage with that '* she goes back to the same idea in an additional sentence that stresses its importance *'I don't have a problem with that'.* However, we see that she has a problem. She notes that she feels very bad. Her intra-personal self contains two desires or two feelings that conflict very much. On the one hand *'I can do more', 'I'm very ambitious and also obstinate'* and on the other hand: *'They didn't tell me much that was new', 'Its not as if I thought that I would achieve who knows what'* ...it is as if Mira calls herself to order, *'to be realistic, to reconcile herself, not to go too far. 'Perhaps I need to accept the truth face-to-face and to reconcile myself to it', 'Perhaps its better to be realistic and perhaps I was thinking too far ahead'.* The use of the metaphor, *to accept the truth face-to-face*, is used to

describe the very difficult feeling that it is only by providing a welcome for it that she will be able to meet with the truth, the reality.  The deliberation is difficult, who is she really?  Is she the ambitious person, who is capable and stubborn? Or could it be that she is *the one who will not achieve who knows what*? Life between these two polarities needs huge energy and willpower. Her decision is: *'So I left it'*.  In other words, in the meantime she does not know how to continue with the knowledge about what she is capable.

Mira describes the great anger that she felt as a result of the diagnosis.  She remembers the conversations that she had with her parents, apparently during her adolescence, she refers incisive rhetorical questions to them, in direct speech that intensifies the emotional experience: *'why didn't they make a diagnosis until now?',* *'Why didn't they think about me with regard to my studying', ' how had I reached this age and now I had to find out what was wrong with me ', 'How was such a deterioration possible?'...* She is aware of the great anger which overcomes her *'anger towards the system, towards them'*. And then she produces another voice, a voice that restrains her liberty to be angry, *Perhaps that was another period',* different circumstances ... but again the injured voice returns, accusing and demanding: *but I demanded that my parents should  give me more respect than they did'*. Mira continues to blame herself and especially her parents. It seems that she is emotionally overwhelmed, the views of past memories arise and pass before her eyes and they incite more and more anger, confusion and disappointment with regard to her parents. She refers a direct question to them full of rebuke: *'Until now you didn't find out what I had?'* and she explains to me *'I was very disappointed',* it was disappointment regarding her parents, who should have taken care of her education. As the anger and disappointment regarding her parents' increases, she stops herself and tries to see the other side.  She raises a hypothesis that perhaps she wasn't ready to study? However her attempts do not succeed.  The story is again retold and the same questions are asked and even additional ones: *'Why did they give up on me?'* Apparently in order to slightly alleviate the pain the narrator provides an explanation: *'They didn't give up on me, they gave up on my capability'*.

**4.7.3 The decision to study and graduating an Educational College** - Despite the recommendations that she received following the diagnosis, Mira decides to study

(A14, A15). She finds a school for Matriculation studies for discharged soldiers and begins to study there together with a friend. The expression '*shocked*' (in a positive meaning) stands at the centre of the narrator's experience. The shock stems apparently from the gap between her view of herself and the pleasant, encouraging and accepting place to which she has come. She goes on to direct speech and carries on a dialogue between those who welcome her at school and her inner world: *You can study and you will succeed'* … *They'll have to open their eyes', 'They don't know who I am and where I come from, they're suffering from an illusion'*, she does not see herself worthy of *'all that encouragement and trust that flew at me'*. On the one hand she hopes very much to succeed, yet on the other hand the fears connected with her inability to succeed arise (these she notes three times) and the way out is '*but at least I'll have tried'*. The coda of the story *'worse comes to worse I'll prove I can't*. The repeated phrase *'I'll accept it face-to-face'*, appears one additional time (A11) and this time the narrator will '*accept face-to-face'* the limitations of her ability to succeed. The 'shock' replaced by the experience of *'It was stunning'*. The narrator repeats this expression twice and with a special intuition emphasises the word *'stunning'*. She talks about the corrective experience of studying. Mira begins to recognise herself as a learner, what and in the manner that is appropriate for her to learn. The metaphor: *'many things became crystallized for me'*, apparently descries the process in which the emotional overwhelming and confusion (know don't-know, stupid not-stupid) become more consolidated into a general knowing '*I established myself from the aspect of my approach to myself and my learning disability', 'I too will succeed'*. It seems that the narrator undergoes a serious transformation in her life, she completes her Matriculation exams over a period of two years. For the first time in her life she understands how she has to study in order to arrive at the desired result, for the purpose that she has set for herself: *'I'm not as stupid as I thought', 'A huge discovery', 'and the revelation that I was capable'*.

Mira searches for a suitable place to study (A18). This time she is already aware of her needs. She looks for a place where she can receive assistance, support and encouragement in order to feel that she has a change. The counsellor in the college with whom she meets is *'a soothing figure who I could turn to'* and she chooses to study in that college. The fear of failure and her still instable belief in herself, increase the need for an external figure on which she will be able to lean when

necessary. The equation that Mira describes: *'As my expectations rose, so the need for confidence was stronger'*, faithfully describes the development that she is undergoing. Since she was told that she is unfit for academic studies she continues to set to herself goals, each time with a higher academic level, so that she needs sources to support her and self- confidence. We are informed about one of the types of coping (A 20) that used during her studies in the college. She accepts the fact of her learning disability and is aware of much exposure ' *At first I even perhaps exaggerated'* that this publicity afforded her at the beginning of her studies. *'Today I don't need to present myself as having a learning disability'*. The image that she uses *'It was like a test that I had to pass'* perhaps suggests the need of Mira to test herself and to test her environment, whether she is able to stand up to the test successfully? Whether the tested environment will stand the test and accept her, the student with a learning disability?

Mira has a worrying problem (A21). She has to persuade the teacher in the college that she is able ' *to write on the blackboard'* despite her dysgraphia. She herself is not yet convinced but she tries to persuade other and herself at the same time. The developmental process that she goes through is expressed in the expression '*didn't really believe this from inside'* and later *'I consolidated something real for myself from inside that I can cope with the dysgraphia'*. The beginning of the story describes her ability to cope with the dysgraphia as '*it seems to me like an illusion'* and at the end of the story: *'what had at first been an illusion was proved to be correct'*.

**4.7.4 The joy of new achievements -** At this stage of the autobiographical interview, almost before the end (A21), the narrator sums up the path that she has taken by stating: *'I have no problem in reaching wherever I want'*. This statement reflects the positioning of her intra-personal self that enjoys the experiences of success and self respect and her ability to rely on herself. Nevertheless she recognises that she still needs more preparation and organization for every performance in her lessons. Mira declares (A17): *'I did the impossible, the unexpected'*. They didn't believe and they didn't expect her to achieve. She herself did not think that she was able to reach as far as she did; she successfully passed the Matriculation exams and completes her first degree in the College. She remembers her mother as the source of support. The metaphor she uses: '*There was a light at the end of the tunnel'* expresses the transition

from a dark place without light to a distant place where light is discovered, this, in her view is her experience of learning. The repeated statement: *'I understood that I was not so stupid'* provides a hint to the dark place from which she has emerged and emphasises the optimistic lighted place, to which she marches forward. *'Its funny for me, my mother, the environment, we joked about it that I with a learning disability who had been in special education, that I should be a teacher?'* These statements describe the transformation of the narrator's life. The environment, her mother and she herself still see the possibility that Mira will be a teacher as something amusing. The last story (A22) is a sort of conclusion for the entire autobiographical story. Mira uses images in order to describe the experiences of success that she experienced at the end of her college studies: *'as though I had climbed up a mountain', 'like stories of people who have succeeded'.* She remembers the belief in herself that she alternately had and did not have. Additional reassurance that strengthens the experience of success comes to the narrator from her environment, from people's reactions, from the estimation that she is awarded and the recognition of her achievements.

### 4.7.5 In summary of Mira's autobiographical story

Through an analysis of the narratives in Mira's autobiographical interview, it seems that the figurative positioning focuses on two motives interwoven throughout the story and inter-related one to the other: "knowledge-problem and action". The story begins with a general statement that they knew there was a problem. Who knew about the problem? What did they do with the knowledge about the problem? From the narrator's point of view they didn't do anything.

Her positioning with regard to the other figures in the story is in a very passive position. The active figures are anonymous and the girl has no control over events. During the story changes take place in the narrator's intra-personal world, there is expression of her self perception in a more active and more involved positioning in relation to other figures in the story. The general knowledge concerning the problem that the girl has is discussed in the context of her memories concerning the education frameworks that she experienced. The adults who were anonymous begin to be identified and they represent *'activeness since they decide, understand, know and transfer her'.* The girl is represented as *'accumulating gaps'* and as someone whom

*'the children do not reject'*. While an adolescent there begin to be changes in her positioning in the story. The narrator attributes actions to the young women which in retrospect position her in opposition to the adults, although not directly within the discourse. Her resistance to sleeping outside home obviously influenced the decision to which educational setting she would be sent to learn.

Mira talks in the present tense about an event from the past *'At last I am not so special and different'*. At this stage it seems that the narrator has knowledge about the problem, she enjoys the new school in which *'everyone has a learning disability like me'*. One of the climaxes of the story is when the narrator positions herself against the other figures in the story in relation to her attempt to gain "knowledge about the problem". As an adult, after her military service she wants to know what she really has, she no longer suffices with general knowledge. The decision to go for a didactic diagnosis widens her knowledge and there is now evidence that her self perception undergoes a serious undulation. The intra-personal self is exposed to painful experiences, to a feeling of threat to her identity and in the discourse this is expressed in dialogues that the narrator conducts with authority figures. She protests against them, claims an insult and demands to know *'How was such deterioration possible'*, *'Why did you give up on me?'*, in other words why did you not know what in her opinion it was possible to know? Why did you not take the action that was required?? Until this point an answer is provided for the first two components of the figurative positioning – the 'knowledge' and the 'problem'. The response to the 'action' component brings us to the climax of the autobiographical story. The narrator undergoes change in her intra-personal self; she positions herself as being independent, active and as leading the main action of her life. The decision to study for Matriculation brings the need to cope with fears, with low self-estimation, lack of confidence and previous attempts to study which were characterised by the narrator as failures. All this does not deter her and does not stop the narrator from beginning a journey of action that leads her to a transformation in her life. The metaphor and the images that the narrator uses testify to the change in her self perception. She sees the *light at the end of the tunnel*. She feels as if she has *climbed up a mountain*. Her story is like the stories of people who have succeeded. The narrator testifies that her self confidence changed enormously, *'I don't have any problem in doing whatever I want'*. She no longer fears receiving the truth face-to-face, she understands and knows that

she is not as stupid as she thought and she says to herself: *'I have done the unbelievable, I can do it'.*

If we analyse Mira's autobiographical story according to Lieblich (Lieblich et al., 1995) we see that the story fits the 'transformation stories', characterised by a transformation that the narrator undergoes. The change (transition, transformation) may be a type of change in belief, a religious or value-related change, a change in the sense of self-realisation, or a change in lifestyle which is described by the narrator as especially significant and the new situations are completely different from the life that the narrator had before the transformation. The recognition of the transformation belongs to the narrator but also belongs to the environment that recognises the change that the narrator has undergone. Mira has undergone a long journey which deserves the term 'transformation'. The alterations in the narrator's intra-personal world show the changes in her self perception: taking initiative, taking risks, not giving up, directing her life's path without considering the external recommendations. The environment cheers her on and she receives confirmation of the transformation that she has made in her life. Her training as a teacher, academic studies for a first degree in education is a form of self-realisation. The statement: *'I haven't achieved anything'* as opposed to the statement *'I don't have any problem in doing whatever I want'*, illustrates the long road that was spread out through Mira's autobiographical story

## 4.8 Analysis of Mira's Feedback regarding her Lessons

The lesson took place in the classrooms of the boarding school where the pupils live and study. Mira teaches the boys' class, twelve pupils, aged 14-16 defined as slightly to moderately mentally handicapped and suffering from additional difficulties. The researcher was present during the lesson and after the lesson conducted a conversation with the teacher which was recorded and transcribed. The conversation contents were divided into stories (which were marked with numbers) and analysis was conducted for each story.

**4.8.1 Teaching skills** - The teacher describes the type of the lesson (R1), a language lesson; it was not a reading lesson since most of the pupils are unable to read. She

indicates her difficult experience with this class, when she gave them work pages. Apparently the pupils were unable to work without close assistance and the teacher felt that it was necessary to work in a different way. She often gives them games which it is easier to use to teach them and the pupils enjoy this. The teacher demonstrates that she is aware of her difficulties, as a novice teacher and is also aware of the importance of adapting her teaching methods to the population of her pupils. The teacher explains the organisation of the class activity. She divided the pupils into two groups. The class assistant, who is trusted by the teacher, works with the lower level group, after the teacher gives her several instructions regarding the board games on the subject of generalisations using matching pictures. The teacher works with the group of pupils at the higher level on the subject of 'rhyming', identifying a sound that closes the word. The teacher notes that there were disciplinary problems at the end of the lesson *'but that always happens'*. For the time being she does not connect this disturbance with the long time required to deal neither with this task nor even with the level of the task's difficulty.

Mira examines (R3) the behaviour of several pupils. She notes different directions until she touches on the root of the problem and identifies the action that she has to take, she explains and I interpret:

- *They test the boundaries* – a general statement regarding the disturbing pupils.
- *It makes it very difficult for me* – a personal statement regarding her.
- *I try to relate to them as adults* – a value statement guiding her reaction.
- *This behaviour does not influence me* – reinforcement for herself to persevere with the path of her reaction.
- *Part of this was to impress you* – examining a possible factor for disturbance.
- *This behaviour is also familiar to us on other days* – a revision of this examination.
- *I understood that I needed to finish, it was too long and difficult for them* – the teacher connects the length of the activity and the behaviour disturbance and takes action to change the situation

Mira notes (R5) that in real time she did not succeed in following what was happening in the second group too. She is aware of her personal difficulty *'It is very difficult for me to divide my attention'*. It is difficult for her to be active, involved, directed and to supervise the pupils' activities in her group and at the same time to *'cast a glance'* at

what is going on in the second group.  The teacher returns twice to her difficulty in the present and also twice repeats her need to improve this ability in the present and in the future.  It is obvious that the teacher has a high level of self-awareness, she is worried about the difficulty and guides herself to active study activity in the class in such a way that she can cope with it.  In other words she can only work with half the pupils at a given time.

**4.8.2 Interpersonal relations with pupils** – In response to the researcher's question, 'w*hat are your strong points as a teacher*?' the teacher notes (R6) her individual approach to each pupil.  She explains the advantages both from the pupil's point of view since they enjoy the work more which is modified for them, and also from the point of view that in this way she feels that she 'reaches' each pupil.  In addition the teacher mentions that she has a *'strong connection'* with the pupils.  Following a period of getting to know them when the pupils' found it difficult to accept a new teacher (after many changes of teachers), she notes that there is a *'relationship of trust and confidence, a very good relationship'* between them.  It is obvious that there is reciprocity in which the teacher sees the connection with the pupils as follows: *'they began to get used to me, I gained their trust, they create a pleasant atmosphere in class; the communication between us is good.'* Mira explains her work method (R7). She reaches each pupil individually and explains the reasons why this is important for the pupils: *'the pupil knows that I reach each one'*, *'I provide an equal relationship and do not discriminate between the pupils'*, *'reduction of jealousy between the pupils'*, *'converse with each pupil and am interested to know what is happening with him in the boarding school'*, *'encourage the pupils to talk and to share what is happening to them'*. The teacher explains why she allowed a pupil to leave the class. She is aware of his special sensitivity to his mother's imminent return from aboard. He asked to join the school's gardener and she allowed him to do so and reveals understanding and empathy for the pupil's feelings.

**4.8.3 Challenges of a beginning teacher**– The conversation is widened (R8) to include an issue that apparently bothers the teacher, and this is the relationship between her and her assistant. The teacher describes the system of relations between them as '*complicated*'. On the one hand the teacher notes that on several occasions she

relies on the assistant, values the great help that she gives her and that her familiarity with the pupils is facilitating. On the other hand, the assistant's work method is unacceptable to the teacher. She is loud, aggressive and acts in a belligerent manner towards the pupils. The teacher finds it difficult to talk to her directly about it at all. She tried a number of times but never succeeded. The teacher wants to tell the assistant that she must be less aggressive and violent with the pupils. She believes that with quiet, tranquillity and pleasant manners it is possible to reach the pupils' hearts. The teacher is new and needs the assistant, but she finds it difficult to come to terms with her methods.

Mira describes the processes that she has undergone since she began to teach. Her entry was very fast, accompanied by many fears and deliberations. The teacher uses the metaphor: ' I directly flowed into the water'  'I flowed into the water' is not a correct expression in Hebrew, The expression should be 'I was carried away by the water' or 'I was carried away by the stream of the water'. This may be a slang usage or the teacher's error (like the use of the expression 'there was light in the tunnel' which should be the expression 'light at the end of the tunnel', 'the division-attention' … instead of 'divided-attention'). The teacher projects the flowing action onto herself, she herself becomes the flowing water and her entry into the work flowed, it was fluent, without restraints. Nevertheless she notes difficulties in certain fields: in the personal field – she worked for a month parallel to a temporary teacher and this made things difficult for the pupils. In the professional field – conducting diagnoses for the pupils and preparing an individual programme for each pupil. In the pedagogic field – many deliberations relating to whether she had reacted correctly to the pupils behaviours; and in addition a heavy burden of work and difficulty coping with a large number of tasks in a short time.

Mira brings an example (R10) of her deliberations in the pedagogic field. She describes a relationship between three pupils where each one of them drags the others into harmful and insulting behaviours sometimes aimed at her, at the assistant or at other pupils. The teacher suggests a number of causes and weighs up her reactions. Is the pupils' behaviour connected with the phenomenon of their mental impairment? Is it connected with their adolescence? And perhaps this behaviour is a reaction to this? She notes the great change that she sees in the pupils in recent months. Their

need to bother has decreased and they know how to gain attention in the context of their normative behaviours. The teacher mulls things over a lot with herself and sees this deliberation as important for her educational work. She notes that some she acquired some things from experience and that she still has much to learn.

**4.8.4 Social interactions** – a description of an educational event (R11). The teacher talks about a meeting between her pupils and pupils of a regular school. The preparations for this meeting included conversations with the pupils about rules of behaviour, consolidations of laws of what was allowed and forbidden, a description of the school to which they were going and the day's programme, getting to know games, problem solution etc. The teacher enjoyed the meeting very much and was proud of her pupils. She is aware that the setting of challenges brings the pupils to higher achievements. She identifies their potential and says the following things about her pupils: *'They have something to reach for, they can achieve more and adapt themselves to the environment, we do not realise their potential, they integrate very well, it is not necessary to make too many remarks to them, there was no need to deal with disciplinary problems'*. She remembers an additional event and talks about it. The pupils worked on the preparation of the play in a very intensive manner. They showed responsibility and perseverance in the performance of the rehearsals. The teacher sees this as 'a very nice achievement', *'they proved to everyone that we could'*. This sentence hints that belief in the pupils' ability was very low and there was a need to *'prove their ability'*. The teacher speaks in plural tense, in other words she and the pupils proved to everyone that they could. It is obvious that this is something very important in the teacher's view and she identifies herself with her pupils.

In another conversation (R13- R17) that took place between the researcher and the teacher, the teacher describes the situation of one of the pupils and her thoughts regarding him. Doron (fictitious name) has great difficulty. He is at a higher level than the rest of the pupils in the class and the teacher is uncertain what it would be correct to do with Doron. She says: *'here he has in fact completed his aspirations. It is as if he is their tutor. Why did he reach such a situation? ... it would be better if they transferred him (to be with pupils) who are more independent and function better ... on the other hand there are many things that he does not know'*. In reply to the

researcher's question: *'Were you ever in a place where you felt you were not suitable?'* the teacher answered: *'Yes it was a waste of time.... A sort of sense of being superfluous, as though you're not needed... He (Doron) is actually superfluous. So we pass the time ...'* the teacher described her feeling when she was in vocational school (as in A3): *'I felt that I was wasting my time. The level was too low. I felt I was able to do more ... I just passed the time there'.* It can be understood that the teacher describes her situation in the past and the situation of the pupil in the present using the same expressions. The teacher goes back (R15) to talking about the pupil. She sees him as a youth who expresses interest: *'He guides himself to things which will advance him and he doesn't stay apathetic'.* The teacher is upset that the pupil cannot advance to his full ability.

Mira is asked whether she has memories from the period when she was in a place which was unsuitable for her (R16) she answers: *'Not really, I haven't gone into it deeply'.* However, she immediately continues to describe the feeling that she felt which was not good, a terrible feeling *'It was as though I was superfluous'.* While she is speaking, memories are apparently aroused and echo within her and the teacher describes a wealth of thoughts and feelings involved in the experience of being superfluous. She sums up these matters in her thoughts about the pupil, she does not know whether *'he feels terribly bad'* … but she thinks it is *'not good for him'.* The teacher does not make a conscious comparison between her situation in the past and the situation of Doron in the present, yet in an unconscious way she uses expressions that are almost identical relating to the same areas.

Mira says that in retrospect she is angry (R17) that she was left so long with the feeling that she was superfluous and that they didn't notice that she was not suitable for that school. She goes back from her story to Doron and says that she does not know whether for him it is the same. The comparison between herself in the past and Doron in the present is very difficult. The sentences: *'I believe that he is very frustrated'* and *'his belief in people has been reduced a lot',* it can be understood that at present the teacher 'puts herself into his shoes' which in the past were also 'her shoes' and she sees and understands the pupil from his point of view. As the teacher remembers her personal experiences, and her personal attempts as a pupil in a place when she felt that she was superfluous, so she has a more profound ability to

understand Doron's situation. Both of them have experience being in a setting that was not appropriate for them, and the teacher now wants to help the pupil *'to break out'* of the setting, and to find a place that will be more suitable.

**4.8.5 Summary of Mira's reflective feedback and educational events**

The reflective feedback regarding the lesson and her description of educational events from her work reveal Mira's professional knowledge in all its complexity. As a teacher at the beginning of her career, in her practicum year, she has to cope with many varied tasks. She prepares a personal programme for each pupil, for the first time, independently and in practice does not even have a mentor teacher to help and advise her. She is praised by the school head teacher for the preparation of the personal programmes and for their quality and for the improvement in the pupils' achievements. Mira is given a class of adolescents that suffered from many changes of teacher. As the class teacher she is responsible for their learning and social areas. During the months of her work she gets to know the class map and prepares the teaching activities accordingly. For example: the division of the class into small work groups, a possible combination of pupils, length of time given for the learning task to each pupil and their optimal physical positioning. She gives expression to her professional judgment in the didactic and curricular fields of knowledge, for example: there is a need for more levels of illustration regarding the subject of the supermarket, or demonstration of the departments as separate categorised groups. Her pedagogic judgment includes the expression of empathy for pupils, flexibility and understanding of the pupils' needs and simultaneously the setting of clear boundaries for what is permitted and forbidden regarding the behaviour between the pupils and in their behaviour towards the teacher and her assistant and towards school property. She uses reasoned pedagogic generalisations.

The area of development and improvement of social and inter-personal skills is important to her; she devotes much thought and focused action to this during the school day. Mira takes an interest in the pupils' lives and experiences in the boarding school; she initiates a discussion and listens to what the pupils say. Her preparation of the pupils for a meeting with regular pupils is additional evidence for this, and expresses her belief that if you aspire to achieve more it is possible to achieve it even with her pupils. The teacher is aware of her difficulties and distinguishes difficulties

concerning her learning disability from other difficulties concerning the fact that she is a novice teacher.

## 5. Discussion

Having detailed the findings and their interpretation, this chapter presents a summary of the insights derived from the three stories and a discussion of the common issues. I shall begin with tables that compile the statements of the three teachers and present the personal memories underlying their professional considerations.

The following table presents statements from Tamar's autobiographical interview and from her reflective feedback (stage 9). The personal memories are laid out opposite the consequent professional considerations.

Tamar – Comparative Summary of Main Statements from the Autobiographical
Interview and the Reflective Feedback

| (A) Personal Memory | (R) Professional Considerations |
|---|---|
| *They didn't manage to complete the learning in the class* | *Every minute in the class is important for me* |
| *The teachers are tired, they don't flow with the children* | *I want the pupils to know they have an address to turn to* |
| *My parents helped me and taught me* | *The parent doesn't allow me to examine him and I can't give a modified exam* |
| *I was ashamed of my handwriting* | *To allow the pupil to marker the text instead of copying* |
| *I relied on the order that existed, it helped me* | *I like to prepare the pupils for the next stage* |

Many of the professional considerations clearly echo childhood memories and it is possible that the teacher is unaware of them. In any case she does not provide reasons for her professional decisions based on childhood experiences. A picture emerges in which a continuous flow exists indicating internal conformity with, or perhaps corrective supplementation of childhood memories. The teacher who as a child was

ashamed of her awkward handwriting wants to make it easier for pupils with a similar problem. They marker the texts instead of copying and receive a modified exam. The teacher devotes special time to pupils with special needs. She flows with the pupils and above all plans the teaching. Planning of times and sharing the learning programme with the children ensures a sort of confidence and fairness which she lacked in her childhood at school and which she grants to her pupils. These findings provide a positive answer to the research questions, regarding personal professional knowledge, derived from personal experience. Childhood memories underlying the professional considerations enrich the ability for empathy and the variety of classroom activities.

<u>Noa – Comparative Summary of Main Statements from the Autobiographical Interview and the Reflective Feedback</u>

| (A) Personal Memory | (R) Professional Considerations |
|---|---|
| *I knew that something inside me was incomplete* | *I knew how to help a child with difficulties and make things easier for him* |
| *I didn't manage to understand what they wanted from me* | *Its important that the pupil should feel that he understands and that he has an experience of success* |
| *The teacher called me by derogatory names and hurt me so much* | *A child who had difficulties came to sit beside me and this is much respected by the pupils.* |
| *The worst possible feeling, that they didn't believe in me* | *The personal relationship is important to me and that the atmosphere should not be tense and threatening* |
| *Examinations are my personal trauma* | *A teacher can know what the pupils know even without an examination* |

As a teacher Noa emphasised the importance of personal consideration and an emotional relationship with the pupil. It appears that her professional world is a corrective reliving of her childhood experiences which focus on her desire to protect the pupil and to ensure that the learning environment will be one of support and encouragement. The repeated mention of her hurtful emotional experience as a pupil

shapes her professional decisions that emerge from emotion rather than from knowledge (*that the pupil should feel that he is understood*).   Noa consciously connects her personal memories with professional decisions and as a result unites her intra-personal self with her professional self.

Mira – Comparative Summary of Main Statements from the Autobiographical Interview and the Reflective Feedback

| (A) Personal Memory | (R) Professional Considerations |
|---|---|
| *I always belonged to a group, I wasn't rejected* | *The pupils learn how to integrate and I don't need to comment too much* |
| *The terrible feeling that I am superfluous, just a waste of time* | *He doesn't belong, a suitable place must be found for him, he no longer has aspirations* |
| *There is no light at the end of the tunnel, everything is very despairing* | *I set more goals each time, and believe in their potential* |
| *I wasn't diagnosed, they gave up on me, on my knowledge* | *We adapted a lot and proved to everyone that we could* |
| *I arrived at a place that was suitable. Everyone had learning disabilities like me* | *I adapt things for each pupil, a personal programme and provide personal consideration* |

Mira's personal memories testify to continuous learning failures, alongside a feeling of social belonging that provides her with an experience of pleasure and confidence. In her professional orientation, her social and inter-personal skills are obvious, and they hold an important place in her sense of professional priorities.  When the teacher describes her deliberations regarding one of the pupils in her class, she remembers an event from her past when she was in an educational setting which was unsuitable for her. This personal memory enriches her empathic understanding of the pupil's difficulties and her consequent pedagogic decision-making.

**In summary**: A world view is formed from past life experiences and shapes events in the present by reviving experiences from those past events. This view is reinforced by the research findings, when we examine the teachers' past memories and compare them with their professional considerations in the present. The story of personal memories is the source of key elements of personal-professional knowledge, as they are presented in the autobiographical story and later in the teachers' reflective feedback.

## 5.1 Characterising life stories

The central question in the narrative approach is: Whether or not the unique character of each personal story prevents any sort of generalisation? As noted in the literature survey (Lieblich et al., 1995; Gargen and Gargen, 1988) there are those who believe that life stories can be characterised by their content and according to their structure. Emanating from the compilation of insights contained in the above tables, this chapter will discuss common issues which were expressed in the life stories in terms of both their content and structure.

**5.1.1 The Structure of the Personal Story** – According to the model proposed by Gergen and Gergen (1988), it is possible to describe life stories according to simple models called 'progression' 'regression' or 'stability' in line with the time dimension. These stories are described as stories along a progressive axis, or as a permanent situation or as a process of continual deterioration. As the teacher's story progresses the insults and battles develop and are overcome by the experiences of success and belief in her. Her ability to cope with difficulties that stem from her learning disability and her success in realising her aspiration to become a teacher, clearly indicate that this is a 'progressive' life story. Mira's story also has a clear line of advancement and it is considered a 'progressive' life story. However, it has an additional characteristic which complies with the concept explained by Lieblich (1995) – the 'transformation' story or the 'two-stage' story. The structure of Mira's life story as a two-stage story enables the distancing of disharmonious events in relation to her life today. The first stage of her story is before the transformation, before the turning point, in other words before she has undergone the didactic assessment and diagnosis. After the diagnosis there is a real change in her life. She understands what is wanted from her, and she

learns how to study and succeeds in her studies. The character of the change is one of self-realisation and self-fulfilment, in this case the fulfilment of her desire to succeed in her studies and to become a teacher. When her desire is realised, her environment also recognises the change that has occurred in her life, and in her words: *'... at first we laughed, would I be a teacher?'*, *'... afterwards the illusion came true'*, *'people tell me: well done, you've done the unbelievable'*. Tamar's story is a story with a clear and striking 'progressive' character. Within the life story that is composed of short stories, each story, by itself, hints at the coping which will eventually lead to maturity and progress. I shall only mention the story relating to the revelation of the learning disability in which Tamar, the young woman, invites her mother to watch the strange phenomenon of her brother's inability to write. The words jump for him and both he and she write with many mistakes and in an awkward handwriting. The autobiographical interview of the three teachers ends with the very optimistic statement in which they declare their feeling that at this stage of their lives they feel they are able to successfully confront any task that is required. This statement reinforces the structure of the stories as 'progressive' and also indicates common content, as will be explained below.

### 5.1.2 Common Contents

**The Question of Identity:** Who am I really? Three teachers, each one in her own way, wonder who they really are. They experience a gap between the feeling of competence alongside the lack of ability, lack of success and failures. This feeling is described widely by students with learning disabilities while they study preparatory courses before university (Einat, 2001). Their personal stories describe the internal throes that actually constitute the difficult experience of living in cognitive dissonance.

*'The formal achievement required by school quickly become the child's own most demanding internal requirement and expectation. In cases where there is a gap between the double internal expectation (that of the school and the internalised expectation of the child) and the actual achievement, internal throes are unavoidable*' (Einat, p.159).

Cognitive dissonance according to Festinger (1957) is that experience of internal tension between different cognitions that do not coexist comfortably with one another. The extreme manipulations undertaken by those who suffer from dissonance in order to settle this conflict may become a delaying force, sometimes with destructive power. As the teachers succeed in their college study, the internal struggles gradually recede and make way for experiences of success which tend to reduce the feeling of cognitive dissonance and strengthen one's sense of self confidence in response to the question: *'Who am I really?'*.

**Diagnosis of Learning Disabilities:** The individual's knowledge that something in him is defective is not easy to absorb. The primeval fear of an injury to one's basic sense of self testifies to the fundamental human need for the experience of physical and cognitive wholeness. The continuous difficulty of life with cognitive dissonance is insufficient to describe the immense rift which people with learning disabilities report, when the results of their didactic assessment and diagnosis became known to them. Learning disability is explained as a disability connected with the brain. It is an unseen disability, but the threat (or confirmation) that 'something in my brain is defective', shakes the very pillars of existence and causes a ferocious mental storm. For a short time there may be a respite from this internal turmoil. The continuous difficulty has been identified, and it has a name, '*It's not simply that I didn't succeed.*' Its called by names such as dyscalculia, dysgraphia, or dyslexia. But the basic problem continues unchanged; how can this defective part be integrated into one's sense of self and reconciled with the desire for completeness? In a mental storm there is denial, lack of trust in the diagnosis, and in one's intellectual ability alongside the need to prove to oneself and *'to prove to everyone that I can'*. From the teachers' stories it is possible to see that the coping methods differ. Some express embarrassment and hide their ugly writing and spelling mistakes while others expose the disability to friends and classmates, thereby testing their willingness to accept her in spite of her learning disabilities. The fear that she cannot be a teacher and the desire to conceal the dyscalculia strengthens the positive choice of the teachers to recognise the learning disability, and with very hard work, to overcome each obstacle in order to realise her aspiration to become a teacher.

**The Experience of Success**:   After a long voyage during which Mira and Noa experienced many failures, they are privileged to experience success with the completion of their college studies. The reason for the success is double: first, the simple pleasure of success and the achievement that gains recognition and respect; and second, which is more complex, the success that gives resonance to the painful memories of the past, to the internal regions of cognitive dissonance, where many efforts were invested and no affirmation of achievement was received.   Tamar's experiences were different.   Her academic achievements were always high, but she noticed the fact that she had to invest more time than other pupils.   Her principal efforts were to learn how to write without mistakes and to ensure that she would not be ashamed of her handwriting.   She views her failure and success in a philosophical and holistic manner and explains that perhaps her artistic skills and creative ability developed to complement her learning disability. In the three life stories the teachers describe their feelings and their conclusions. They express a strong sense of personal power, which almost sounds like a childlike experience of omnipotence, *'I know that I can succeed in everything'*, *'I am able to do all that I want'*.   The images that the teachers use to describe the experience of success testify to their being exalted, *'like reaching the summit of the mountain'*, *'like stories about people who succeeded'*.

After describing the three common issues, immerging from the data; the question of identity, diagnosis of learning disabilities and the experience of success I will start to summarise the principal insights and make some conclusions.

## 6. Summary and Conclusion

Before presenting the research conclusions, I shall briefly review the research from its beginning. The research question was:

What is the contribution of the 'Personal Self' to the 'Professional Self' for teachers with learning disabilities at the inception of their career?

The role of personal experience and personal memory as part of the teacher's professional identity was investigated using a narrative research technique. In order to learn about the teacher's personal self, I asked her to tell me her personal story. The story was obtained in a conversation that I held with each teacher called an 'autobiographical interview'. In order to learn about the teacher's 'professional self', I observed three lessons that the teacher taught. After each lesson the teacher analysed the lesson to the best of her understanding. This analysis was called the 'reflective feedback' for the lesson. In order to obtain additional information concerning the professional identify of the teacher, she was asked to tell me about an educational event from her work and thus the scope widened to include the teacher's attitudes and values. The research data were collected from three sources, recorded and transcribed, divided into stories and numbered and subjected to narrative analysis and interpretation. From the autobiographical interview, knowledge was gathered concerning the 'personal self', which explained parts of the intra-personal self and of the inter-personal self. This was seen through the positioning of the narrator-- how she positioned herself with regard to other figures in the story and how she used metaphors and images, repetitions and omissions in the story's contents. From the reflective feedback and descriptions of educational events, the teacher's 'professional self' emerged including her professional knowledge, noted according to the criteria of pedagogic content knowledge and didactic content knowledge, reading of the class map and use of reasoned pedagogic and didactic generalisations.

I relate the personal story of three teachers with learning disabilities at the inception of their careers. I present three different stories each with a unique personal tone that throw light on their individual skills and difficulties; the path and the obstacles that each of them traversed in order to become a teacher. However these stories also indicate something common for people with learning disabilities.

Coping with gaps between different cognitions, a perpetual experience of life in cognitive dissonance weighs very heavily on the individual during the years of development and creates frustration and low self-esteem. Using a system of recognition for people with learning disabilities and provision of support for these learners, they manage to assimilate within higher educational settings with the investment of strenuous efforts without which they could not complete their academic requirements.

Among the common contents of the teachers' stories, is the '*question of identity'* – who she really is. In other words which of the teacher's 'identities' is her real identity? The identity of the one who does not know what they want from her when they ask her about the world of numbers? Or perhaps of the young girl who writes in an awkward script and with many spelling mistakes? Or perhaps the identity of the intelligent young woman, who plays instruments, sings and paints skilfully? The three teachers testified to a difficult experience that they underwent when they were assessed and diagnosed didactically and received the results of the diagnosis. It appears that the teachers knew about their learning disability. However the knowledge of the results of the assessment caused a very difficult crisis explained by the fear of stigmatisation and being considered abnormal, even though this is an invisible abnormality. It is possible that their desire to become teachers in the future helped them to continue to study and to overcome the difficulties. The experience of success that was new for two of the teachers did not eliminate the learning disability as Noa would have wished. How was it possible to obliterate it? Would the dyscalculia cease to exist? Actually, it became an experience of empowerment for the teachers that radiated a feeling of professional capability for the future.

Using the technique of narrative-interpretative research, the organising positioning of the narratives of each of the teachers was identified, and it indicated an internal coherency between the autobiographical stories and the professional stories in the reflective feedback regarding the lesson. The two sources created a complete picture in which personal memories combine with the professional experience of the present. Tamar emphasises order and correct organisation as the protective and responsible part of her story. Noa sees the teacher's love for the pupil as a source for the pupil's

success, while for Mira, knowing the problem and taking action that is appropriate for her run like a silken thread through her story.

The three tables presented in the discussion chapter demonstrate that personal memories became part of the teacher's personal-professional knowledge. Events from the past that were engraved in memory became a sort of guide/counsel for the professional consideration of the teacher and were 'translated' into educational learning activity.   The personal memory, acting as the teacher's guide and mentor in her present-day professional consideration, often appears in an overt and conscious manner and sometimes in a manner that is concealed from the teacher herself. The research question, whether it is possible to identify components from the autobiographical story that are reiterated and appear in the professional considerations of the teacher, is indeed founded and affirmed.

A teacher at the inception of her career uses two types of knowledge: professional-academic knowledge and personal-professional knowledge.   The professional knowledge that she has recently acquired during her training is accessible knowledge although it does not yet include the important element of the teacher's experience of use of the knowledge in practice. Knowledge based on practical experience, including interactions with pupils in the field of teaching and in the field of education, is not yet available or it is still very immature.  From the stories of the teachers in the present research it emerges that when we know the teacher's autobiographic story we can trace the source for a large proportion of the didactic and pedagogic considerations that the teacher chooses to use. In other words, the teacher produces them from a store of memories and events that were etched in her memory during the years of her childhood and adolescence.  In most cases the teacher does not consciously indicate the connection between the past event and her present pedagogic decision.  However, there are cases where the teacher is aware of a relevant event in the past and uses it as a reason for her current actions. Noa: '...*that no child in my class will feel like I felt and so* ...'.

Before describing the implications of the research and making some recommendations for the future I would like to reflect on the weaknesses and strength of the study in order to emphasise some facts from my perspective now, towards the end of my

thesis. As for the weaknesses of this study, there is a permanent dilemma in qualitative research concerning the number of participants. I preferred to study three teachers with the data of $128^8$ stories that were the source of the research and with the wide description to demonstrate their professional life at the beginning of their career as persons with LD. Nevertheless I am aware of the problem of generalisability and with the help of the strong qualities of the research I hope to create another balance. All the three participants were female as it happens to be in primary schools in Israel. The strengths of this study can be described first by the way of analyzing the stories. The analysis of the stories draws a clear picture of the professionalism of the teachers that include the identification of professional-knowledge with the professional self-knowledge. Another strong point in this study is the coherence between the different sources of stories and also the positioning and the identification of organizing figurative structures. In addition I would like to emphasise the authenticity of the stories that is valuable in the qualitative paradigm.

If the study was to be repeated some new directions could be considered. Enlarging the number of the participants can enrich the data and perhaps add new information. In the recent study all the data was gathered from recorded conversations, asking written stories from teachers that do not have LD perhaps can enable new perspectives.

## 6.1 The Contribution of the Research, Implications and Recommendations

The contribution of this study to the world of knowledge and to the field of education is indicated on three levels: the first is the contribution to teacher education research. The second is the contribution to knowledge concerning teachers during their first year of teaching and to the staff that guide and accompany them during induction to the teaching profession. The third is the contribution to the methodology of narrative analysis and in particular to our understanding of the relationship between personal and professional  narratives.

The present research adds an important layer to the presentation of the personal story as a rich resource for professional judgments in the initial year of a teacher's work.

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[8] See Appendixes 1-6 – a collection of representative stories.

The findings build on and develop the findings of earlier studies (Zilberstein, Ben-Peretz and Ziv 1998; Pritzker, 2000; Zellermayer, 2003, Wertheim, Vogel and Fresco, 2004; Avissar, 2005) which investigated the personal stories of teachers from personal perspectives and attempted to integrate aspects of these with accounts of the teacher professional development. As emerged from the findings of the present research, judgments made in teaching, founded on didactic and pedagogic knowledge, were not detached from past memories. This finding reveals the importance of the memories within each teacher's personal story to their personal and professional development as a teacher.

This link between past memories and pedagogic and didactic decision-making in the present, is an important contribution to our understanding of the novice teacher. While previous studies (Yaffe, 2003; Maskit and Yaffe, 2007) point to personal awareness as a promoting factor for professional development and for the conceptualisation of the role of the teacher (Avisar, 2005), the present research has identified the trails of past memories that enrich the novice teacher's professional judgments in initial professional work. Awareness of the autobiographical story is likely to enrich the professional insights of the new teacher and of the staff that support the teacher.

Finally, it should be noted that the present research provides a contribution to the methodology of narrative analysis, using narratives from different life areas and analysing them the level of structure, content and interpretation. This research also continues the path of analysis at a linguistic level suggested by Schiffrin (1996), Kupferberg and Gilat (2000), and Kupferberg and Green (2001) who identified the figurative structure as the central story in whose spirit and contents most of the other stories are written. It confirms that the use of this approach can increase a researcher's ability to focus on the unifying story in order to improve the effectiveness of narrative research and to cope with an unending torrent of stories. Other studies identified the structures of stories (Labov, 1972, Gergen and Gergen, 1988, Lieblich, 1995 and others) and emphasised the meanings of the internal world of the narrator assisted by discursive psychology, and concepts of figurative positioning, organising figurative positioning and figurative language. The present study contributes to the understanding of the narrator's internal world by identifying situations that appear

repetitively in stories from both personal and professional areas. The combination of linguistic and psychological approaches in narrative analysis enriches the understanding of reciprocal relations and mutual affinities between the professional and the personal. It was found that the personal knowledge embodied in the autobiographical story constitutes a significant layer in the structuring of the professional knowledge of teachers with learning disabilities at the inception of their work in teaching.

The implications of this research in the context of teacher education can promote the research into a new path of recognizing special needs and new populations of teachers. In recent years there has been a decline in the demand for uniformity and search for a common identity or pseudo-common identity and the recognition of cultural and personal differences among pupils is increasing. Against this background, a certain extent of openness has developed towards the individual and towards populations that differ from the majority. It is also possible that this open-mindedness depends on the professionals, the teacher educators and the teachers themselves, as people who are aware of their own professional development. In the present research there is attentiveness to the authentic personal story of the individual. The attempt to learn from the story of the teacher with learning disability about her personal and professional self leads to the discovery of her individual voice rather than a uniform statement. Each one bears her personal story. This is an immense resource capable of enriching its owners with much professional knowledge, for as we have seen the complexity of professional knowledge combines academic learning and the individual's personal experience. We should see teacher education as directing and guiding learning that listens to the personal story. Integration of young teachers' personal stories with their training offers an important opportunity to foster teachers with the ability to integrate teaching and listening skills effectively with both the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions.

Learning to listen to the personal story or learning case stories (Zilberstein, Ben Peretz and Ziv, 1998) may link theoretical learning with practical learning. This would begin with the learning of psychological, educational and sociological theories in the context of personal experience and the personal story. If teachers learn to '*listen'* to their personal story and respect it as well as listen to the stories of

colleagues, there is a good chance that they will know how to listen wisely and with sensitivity to the pupils' personal stories and to respect them. Even now there are pupils in classes who experience the same feelings as described above by the three teachers. The sensitivity of teachers who have had the same experiences can be employed to create safer and more supportive learning environments. This sensitivity can offer a safe place for the *'personal story'* of a child too. Educating teachers to be professionals by using skills of '*listening'* to their pupils and to themselves is a huge mission which generations deal with. Revealing the personal component of professional self is a meaningful beginning. It shows us new possibilities in the process of educating students on their way to becoming teachers.

The present research captures '*moments*' in the professional world of three teachers. It would be worthwhile to continue to study the dominant characteristics in their professional development longitudinally. In other words, to what extent does the component of the teacher's learning disability continue to accompany her throughout her professional life? An additional direction for research would be to focus on broadening the research population and analysing the personal stories and reflective feedback of additional teachers who have a background of learning disabilities.

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## 8. Appendixes

## 8.1 Interview with Tamar – the Autobiographical Story (A)

(A-1)... I was a bookworm; I read a lot of books.  If I left the house it was to go to the library in order to change a book and I would even read on the way.  Books were the things that were most important for me and also the sea.  My parents took me almost every day to the sea.  Until today it's like that, I go every day to the sea.

(A-2) What do I remember?  I was a person who kept to me.  I wasn't particularly sociable.  It was only in Years 8-9 that I began to be sociable, before that I kept very much to my own corner.  I was with several good friends and that was all.  ….

(A-3) In Year 9 we learnt in streams, I chose architecture, combined with art.  After Year 12 , I continued to Year 13 and Year 14 and completed school with Matriculation and a degree in architectural engineering.  I had a boyfriend in high school for three years and we parted. During the military service, a wonderful period of my life,. I studied Judaism and art.  I learnt art with artists for whom I looked after the gallery and in return they taught me..

(A-4) After my release I worked a bit as a waitress, in architecture in various offices and I saved money for four, five months and went for a trip for two years.  I flew to Australia and New Zealand, afterwards I was in India and Nepal and that area.  I went to Canada and came back via London.

(A-5) Immediately after I returned I had to decide what I wanted to learn. Architecture is good money but my spirit was not in it.  . As a child I had wanted to be a judge but in high school I abandoned this because I decided that in our state there was no justice, …The change will not come from the law, … If a teacher throws a fitting word to a child it could influence him and bring about a change.  It might not,

but if there is one child that I influence during the twenty years that I shall work as a teacher that is better than a judge … I continued to search: art was for me, I painted from the soul. I am a talented painter, it's in our genes, all the family is in the field of different arts, but not in order to be an art teacher. I thought about special education, but if I see a child cry I immediately cry with him, and it is really not fitting to approach him with pity.

(A-6) I came to an open day at the college and met with Dr. Y., a really stunning woman. She had a very, very great influence on my life. She explained to me what science and technology is. I understood that this was a very interesting field, varied, renewing and it was exactly for me. I can't be static; I need a lot of change. Within this discipline it is possible to choose different areas and I was interested in this and decided I would choose it.

(A-7) There were three years of studies instead of four because I was an engineer. I could choose different course which were not compulsory, just to widen horizons. I had three wonderful years. During the time that I was abroad I had also learned (spiritual studies and meditation etc.). There were two courses, two lecturers that I especially enjoyed studying with and they greatly influenced me, and I use this in my work. I learnt how important personal consideration is and how to make contact with a pupil so that he could turn to me when he felt it necessary. How to listen, how to maintain the rules when managing a class. In the third year I taught in the enrichment classes of a school with a very strong population. The children there are exposed to all the innovations in world knowledge and they receive all that they desire. It wasn't easy to arouse and interest them, and the effort was definitely worthwhile.

(A-8)In my practicum year I was with a population that was exactly at the other extreme. It was a school that was closed because of its quality. …I succeeded in holding on there for a year, the other women left after a few months. The fact that I coped was a huge gift for me. Today I am not frightened by difficult pupils… in the middle of the year I reached a plateau with them and from then on it was okay until the end of the year. I loved the profession; I am very satisfied with my work. This

year I work with a new school, the population is not easy but that's fine for me, I teach mathematics and sciences in Years 4, 5 and 6.

Did you have teachers in school like those you described before?

(A-9) No, in primary school I had those old teachers. Perhaps they weren't old in age but in their character they were exhausted, in my opinion they needed to leave … school was good, it induced to learn but if you have a worn out teacher in front of your eyes that's not what the child wants to see. They were older than my grandmother, an old personality, they didn't flow with the children, were unable to laugh at a child's joke. For vacations they used to give us half a maths book to do by ourselves. All that they had not taught, because they didn't manage to finish, they gave us to do at home. I remember that all the Passover holiday I sat and studied. 'Half maths, half Hebrew book'. It's unacceptable. Are you teaching or sending the children to learn alone? In my view it's inappropriate, 'lousy'.

How did this girl feel, having to learn half a book by herself?

(A-10) I wasn't left alone. My parents helped me a lot: My mother taught me English and maths, father taught me Bible and they both taught me Hebrew. I had a well organised daily routine during vacations. I had an hour for this and an hour for that and every day we'd go to the sea. They didn't leave me alone; my parents taught me and helped me a lot. Everything was done in its own time and place, what I could I did alone and what I couldn't, my parents would check with me. What I didn't know they would explain to me, even at the sea. We were four days on vacation by the sea, several families and there was an hour of studies on the sand or on the table. But it was fair, because everything had its own time and I relied on that order, it helped me.

(A-11) It bothered me that they gave us so much homework during the vacation. The teachers dropped it on the parents. The teacher did not provide an explanation of the chapter but it had to be learnt alone, fractions and other things. So what is the school for? It's superfluous? Was it for friends? I wasn't sociable, I preferred to read books and be by myself.

(A-12) Another memory that I have, I would read books under the table, and if not, then I would draw. I discovered my talent for drawing and I really enjoyed drawing and I wasn't willing to give up my drawing. …If they told me to read a chapter I read it and knew it,… they had no reason not to allow me to draw. Because I knew, even if the teacher asked a question in order to snare me… I also remembered everything by heart. …it was an enjoyable feeling that I could do what I wanted to, whatever I fancied….

(A-13) There was a problem with the books: I couldn't put down a book before I had finished it. I couldn't concentrate in the lesson until I knew how the book ended … the tension would eat me up and the teachers understood me. One annoying teacher insisted that I put the book aside… Even today I have to finish a book that I begin to read ... But today I know not to start if I don't have sufficient time to finish. As a girl, I had a problem; I didn't know that in another 10 minutes I would have to stop.

(A-14) In high school it was already otherwise, I wouldn't go into a lesson that I did not like and felt that I didn't need… I would go to the library, take a book and read or go to the den where there were all those who used hashish and sat with them… I would go to the art classes even when I didn't need to, I enjoyed it. It was good at high school. …It was a period when I was a rock fan, a 'rocker'; I listened to rock, wrote and played on a guitar. In Years 11 and 12 I read fewer books, I simply put them aside, except for what was compulsory for the Matriculation. I played more, wrote songs and wrote two books too (I didn't publish them but they are written). One is short stories, metaphors in the style of Etgar Keret and the second is more spiritual.

(A-15) There were teachers there that I respect a lot until today. The architecture teacher influenced me a lot and until today I think that I do things because of his

influence. … Yes, to combine two professions: one for the soul and the second for an income. …The income of a teacher,... It's sad that this is the situation… Later I want children and I think that this will be the combination. The statements of that teacher influenced me. He was a fantastic person. I respect him enormously, his eyes shine, and he has a good soul.

When was your learning disability diagnosed? Why did they diagnose you?

(A-16) From a very early age, I discerned that I had certain problems, and I saw that my father and my brother and my sister also had them and I understood that it was genetic. It was then in Year 9 or 10. I understood that I used greater efforts than others in order to reach the same results. I always had hundreds but I had spelling mistakes and I thought that that was illogical, as a child who read so much, it shouldn't happen.… I understood that there was something illogical here, that a child who reads and writes and creates had mistakes, it wasn't natural; something was illogical. I took my brother's notebook and saw that he too had many mistakes and the writing did not look good. He was not a bookworm like me, so he had more mistakes. I told him: '*Let's read a book'*. I read a page to him and then asked him to read and I saw that he said the words but didn't really read. He told me *'The words jump about for me'*. He read the words in the sentence but not according to the correct order. He remembered by heart from what I had read. I didn't have the problem that the words jumped for me, but I had terrible writing and it disturbed me a lot and also his writing was terrible.

(A-17) I said to my mother *'Come and see how he reads this page. He already remembered it three hours by heart…, but he could not read, the words jump about for him'*. Mother said to me: *'What are you talking about? What do you mean the words jump about for him?'* and I explained to her: *'He hears and remembers but see he can't read…* and then mother asked me how I discovered that, and I told her that I too had many mistakes and she said *'I know but I thought it had passed for you'* . When I was little, mother examined my exercise books and she thought it was normal, natural that young children write with mistakes. … she saw that I still wrote with the

same mistakes (in Year 9 or 10) and that I had terrible writing, shocking. I worked on it hard, a lot.

(A-18) What was this? I am a woman and a woman should have delicate and beautiful writing, not like a man … its illogical … you write a greeting to a child and you want it to be beautiful and I didn't succeed. In my drawing too it was very important for me that the signature would be beautiful. I worked on it very hard and each time I improved a bit and I had less mistakes. Today I can write without mistakes. It helped that I read when I was small. Each time I improved and I had fewer mistakes but if I need to write quickly in a lecture, it will be full of mistakes because I need my mind to think while writing, the mind needs to think before writing and then words jump up at me, I see the words as they are written in the book but its slower. I began to work together with my family we took blank pages and wrote words where there were mistakes. Like 'read' and 'red' …Each time we added other words and repeated the words that we had already corrected and we enhanced their memory. It helped me a lot that I had read a lot of books because I remembered how the words were written In the book. I saw that this was a problem that could be solved.

What feeling did you have as a result of this discovery?

(A-19) At first I felt that I had a problem, I didn't like having the problem and especially not discovering it at adolescence, when even without this I had enough matters, even without this 'discovery'. At first I was embarrassed. I tried to avoid showing my exercise book to people outside the family. I wanted to hide it. Because I wrote fast there were mistakes and I was very embarrassed for them to see. Afterwards I was ashamed that my writing was so ugly. I had a trauma because of this. If notes were passed from one friend to another during the lesson, I couldn't answer as I wanted to because I was ashamed of my writing and the mistakes that I had. I would answer with yes or no and later at the break I would say the things, speak with my friends. It harmed the social aspect. There is a birthday, you want to

write a nice greeting to a child, in nice delicate handwriting so that it will be personalised and it's impossible.

(A-20) I felt that I had a problem and that until I overcame it I didn't want others to know, apart from my family. I had times when I thought: *'What, am I stupid*?' (laughs) … *'How can it be that you read so much and don't succeed in writing without mistakes*?' … *'Are you retarded?'* … and then I began to read about it, I read, I researched, I understood that this was genetic. No-one was guilty, it was simply genetic. I understood that it was possible to cope with it, to solve the problem. I had a need to prove it to myself and I did everything as well as possible. I prepared typed greetings. In class I would write fast and at home I would copy and correct it so that I would have a good looking exercise book to give to the teacher to check.

What feeling did you have in your inner world?

(A-21) A feeling of victory!!! It built who I am. I set myself a goal and I achieved it. This tells me that any goal that I set for myself I can achieve. In more or less time, but I am able to do it, it's very strengthening. I identified a problem; I didn't sweep it under the table. I didn't cry about it, I didn't ignore it. There's a problem, we'll solve it and I'm very pleased that I solved it. Today my writing is good and I have almost no spelling mistakes. I have invested many efforts. It built me into what I am today, my curiosity, to understand things and to solve them without help from outside. I have a large library and if I have a problem I search until I have a sufficient answer.

When you arrived at the college, you asked to undergo a diagnosis? If so why?

(A-22) When I reached the college I had passed the part of being ashamed. I knew how to ask for help and I saw that I could succeed in overcoming most of the difficulties. Even in Years 13 and 14 at school I asked the teacher to slow down the pace etc. I saw that I could achieve whatever wanted; perhaps perversely the disability helped me? Perhaps because of it I paint, who knows? Perhaps because of it I am a good artist? Who knows? I don't know! Perhaps perversely this disability is a gift that not everyone is granted …

(A-23)  I need more time so that I shall have less spelling mistakes.  I don't like to have mistakes, especially if it is possible to prevent them and with extra time – I have less mistakes.   Isn't it a pity to present work with mistakes?   It also strengthens me and I learn to write with less and less mistakes.  Its three years and it would be a shame to waste the time. When a teacher receives work with mistakes – even if it's a college and its with awareness of the learning disability – I think that the teacher will have less respect for the work, it's a stigma.

(A-24) – I want also to tell you about the learning disability, when I began to teach it bothered me because I was afraid to write with mistakes, it was no longer appropriate for me.  Not because of the shame but because of the fact that the pupils might receive words from me with mistakes and they might remember it and be sure that it was correct to write it that way because the teacher wrote it like that, and they would go out with that.

But today, with all the advanced technology, you just need to work a little harder and there is no problem. I work with transparencies when I have a lot of writing.  I work with the Internet, I prepare summaries for them and this makes it entirely easier for the pupils and saves time.  A person, who has a disability, finds the way to solve it. Every problem has a solution.  Today I already write directly on the board, I work with summaries because that saves time for me, this material is without mistakes.

## 8.2 Tamar's Reflective Feedback (R)

**Following the Observation of her Lesson**

(R-1) …"The lesson began with a slight disturbance – I like to be punctual with timing and because it's the first lesson, some of the pupils serve in the 'gold guard' [*meaning:* zebra crossing monitors] and they arrive ten minutes late, and each minute of the lesson is important for me.  Having no alternative, I repeat the beginning of the lesson.  In this case, it turned out well because we went over the experiment that we had conducted in the last lesson and the double repetition helped some pupils. The goal was to gather the results of the experiment in order to deduce conclusions and from them to reach the subject of physical fitness and its influence on the pace of heartbeats and in general on our lives.

There were several interruptions during the lesson – some legitimate. Children on the 'gold guard' who take Ritalin only took it when they arrived and then it took them time until they calmed down. … I've gone through the process with them, you see there is nothing that can be done about it, then they become more restrained – this concerns three pupils.

(R-2) Most of the pupils were attentive to the lesson; they paid attention and took an interest.  The subject is connected with their lives and they are interested. It also fascinates them… suddenly discover and understand the connection between effort and the rate of the heartbeats, to the strength of the beats.  At the end of the lesson on the slide that I showed I intended to present them with a problem which they would think about and present their answers in the next lesson – in this way the pupils know what the subject is, they think about it and come to the next lesson with all sorts of ideas that they have thought about.  Something has already settled in their heads.  I like to prepare them for the next stage, to know the next step.

These are the three stages according to which I work: at the beginning of the year, actually every month, I give out a page containing the programme of what we will learn during the month. At the end of the month we mark what we have managed to do and what we didn't, … there were disturbances and then we managed to do less

and it's a pity, and the pupils know exactly what I expect from them and it helps them.

(R-3) It's very important that the pupils know what the programme is, it helps them. In any lesson, I can indicate what will happen in the future. In general I think that the lesson was okay. I didn't reach all that I wanted to in the lesson but it's clear to me that the ten minutes that were missing at the beginning of the lesson had an influence. This year I feel more comfortable with my timekeeping according to the timetable, I feel less pressed.

(R-4) During the lesson there was a learning conversation, examining the experiment, writing from the board and we consolidated the conclusions we had reached in the conversation. There was a discussion. Pupils asked questions and we clarified matters that had not been clear. The lesson that takes place after a lesson in which there was an experiment is always a calmer lesson, and perhaps less active.

The pupils copied the conclusions we made from the board.

(R-5) Usually I consider that copying from the board is a waste of time. Often I prefer to provide them a printed page and I go over it with them and we mark the page together, and this has a great advantage. There are pupils who take a long time to copy, you have to wait for them and this places them in a bad position, so I prefer not to cause them to undergo that experience…. There were pupils in the lesson who 'sailed away' to all sorts of places –They are not at the level of the class and they work with a personal workbook – I give them special activities that are appropriate for them.

(R-6) R. also has a large gap from the rest of the class, but his mother doesn't permit him to have a personal programme, so there is no option, …

There are other pupils, approximately 8 pupils, who are at a low level.  Some have personal programmes and others need reinforcement.  Two come to me at home and receive preparatory help for their exams.

(R-8) …The pupils at a high level, they are mainly the ones who participate…  They are very serious, they are very curious….they initiated the pupils' walk from another class when they had finished their running in the sports class, and they examined their pulse and listened with a stethoscope to their heartbeats.  They took it very seriously…

When they go outside there are pupils who are less attentive and see it as leisure…. So I give 15 minutes for the experiment and that's enough.  They go home with questions and then they send me the questions by e-mail and search by themselves on the Internet. …They have already learnt by themselves far beyond the level required in the class, using the Internet.

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(R-9)….But there is also one at a low level and he has a strong aspiration and tries a lot and comes to learn with me and he is actually advancing. In all the disciplines he sits on 30.  With me he will already reach 70. He also has difficulty writing, but his strong desire will conquer… there are other children for whom individual help is very important.

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(R-10)... In general I teach all the class at a higher level than the required standard. Its worth aspiring upwards, and then you achieve more. If you do not aspire you achieve less.  A teacher can never achieve everything, so it's preferable to ask and plan for a higher level and then the results of the entire class will be higher.  The pupils are able to comply with high requirements.

Sometimes there are pupils from a lower level who are active in the lesson and ask very appropriate questions – [presents an example] …

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(R-11) My tests are not uniform but adjusted –… The pupils who have been diagnosed – those for whom an oral examination has been determined - do an oral examination. There are pupils, who are not diagnosed, but you don't need to be a genius to understand that they are not examined only because their parents did not want them to be diagnosed; they receive a personal questionnaire which is adapted. They usually get American questions, because I don't need to test their handwriting, only their knowledge.

With the parents' consent I have come to point where I have their consent to give them examinations in which I can test their knowledge –,… but he has difficulty writing. It's almost impossible to understand his writing and he gets 20 in an exam. But I know that he knows far, far more.

The exam is exactly the same, and in addition there are bonus questions, intended to challenge the pupil.  There are pupils to whom I give a word store, but most of them do not need that.  There are four pupils who speak English and still do not have a command of Hebrew.  I give them exams in English and also refer them to suitable learning material in English.

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(R-12) There is one more thing that I want to relate to, and that is my difficulty – I deliberate a lot regarding what it is possible to do, how to intervene correctly regarding the issue of the relations between the pupils…  I turned to the counsellor and she didn't really help me.  I deliberate a lot by myself, H. annoyed a pupil; he didn't want her to go past his table. She is a rejected pupil.  The child hurt the pupil; I was present when he hurt her. Should I stop the lesson?  …

I'm not the class mentor – but this bothers me.  I don't want pupils to be hurt in general and certainly not in my lesson.  The pupils apparently ostracised her, they block her way and make insulting remarks to her.  I want her to feel secure, so that they won't hurt her, and that he and the others won't ever act like that.

I am still not sure how to react…  Now, in the lesson I told H. (quietly) that I don't allow him to act like that in my lesson and it passed.  I am still deliberating, reading [the situation] and don't know how it is correct to react.  On the one hand, it's impossible to stop the lesson for every remark by a pupil,… to destroy complete lessons. On the other hand, I want every pupil to feel secure in my lesson, at least that. And the third thing is that I want them to know that they have an address [to turn to]. Because the child's violence is not connected to the girl that he harms, it's connected with his problems that he has to solve and deal with. The injured child also has a problem and obviously has several things to solve herself.  Perhaps there is something that she does that causes an entire group to reject her.

## 8.3 Interview with Noa – the Autobiographical Story (A)

(A-1)… In primary school I had a mathematics teacher who really did not like me. Because of this I didn't get on with mathematics.  When I arrived home my brothers would do my homework… and thus things rolled on in maths.  In high school too I had a teacher that I didn't get on with at all and then I was already having private lessons.  The teacher decided that I would not be in Stream A and I decided that I would stop studying maths.

(A-2) … I decided that I had to do Matriculation exams in maths because I wanted to study special education.  I always knew that I wanted to study special education, my mother also taught and this was my dream.  I always knew that I would be a teacher….  But, I knew that something inside me was incomplete.
This appeared in simple daily activities of buying, how much change I needed to receive, all sorts of logical things concerning numbers or amounts, that was something that I had always feared, been deterred by, didn't succeed in understanding what was wanted from me...

(A-3) When I began to study special education, in the first year, I understood that something was not right with me and I needed to find out what was happening with me, and I went for a diagnosis.  Suddenly a sort of dam burst: something in reading comprehension and also something in concentration difficulties and of course dyscalculation…  Very, very difficult, I received a blow, I was in shock.   I remember that the diagnostic tester told me: *But how do you want to be a teacher at all if you have something functional which is not correct, not normal.*  It was very, very difficult for me to accept this, I felt that this was a personal failure and also that because of this my dream could not be realised… This was a disappointment and a sense that something was wrong with me and not simply that I felt that something was out of order.  It was in my first year of studies, it was very difficult for me. Everything was so stuck.

(A-4) …This 'being stuck' is that I can no longer continue from here, until,... you cannot understand others. I tried to think how I could change this, from dyscalculation, so that I should not be like that, that I should be normal … It was very difficult. I deliberated: Yes to continue my studies, to stop my studies. There were many things to cope with… I decided that I would fight, and the truth is that all the studies in the college were one big battle all the time. It was difficult to say that I had something … I felt that I had to fight with all the time and to prove that I could do it. I had to prove to myself and to them that I could. …all the time under pressure trying to be perfect… I was terribly pressed. Even on Saturday I wasn't able to enjoy myself because all the time I had to prove to others and to myself that I could succeed. All the time battling…

(A-5) I had support from the family, from my husband and friends; it even frightened me a bit that if I didn't succeed they wouldn't believe in me so much? I finished my studies proudly and it was good for me. I proved to myself that I could, that I was normal. I think that I can also now have better understanding of a child who has difficulties because I have learning disabilities myself. … I have gone back to being 'stuck', if something gets stuck I all the time say to myself: *'Hey, what's with you?'*. I'm afraid to disappoint myself and other, I need to please everyone, and everything needs to be perfect …

(A-6) I have a memory from primary school, about the math teacher. If it happened today, she would no longer teach, they would already have fired her. Today parents complain and they would get rid of her. She would call me: *'Bad one, Bad one'* in front of the entire class, in front of all the pupils, that was my nickname. I had a plaster on my right hand and she said to me, *'Write with your left hand'* I wanted to prove to her that I wasn't … she hurt me so badly. I didn't tell and I didn't say what I felt but it was 'stuck' and it amassed and amassed and I'm sure that that's also the bit about my weight and getting fat. I always knew that I had difficulty learning and I didn't know how to define it, and it's not simply that all the time I looked for food. Only after the army suddenly I discovered … discovered that I had amassed a lot of things inside me that I didn't need, like all the frustrations regarding my studies.

(A-7) It was terribly difficult. I didn't understand at all how they did the multiplication tables. What was it, how was it done? It wasn't logical. It all began from logic and I didn't understand this logic. All those verbal problems, that Danny had 8 marbles. I needed to see it in front of my eyes so that I would understand. But until today when I give money, I don't have a clue, I don't know how much money they should give me back until today, really day-to-day things. Today I know not to fight but to bypass the difficulty

(A-8) I have another memory concerning the math teacher in high school. When I had already taken private lessons and I was again on the crest of the wave, with my highest motivation, to show myself and to show everyone that I could, he didn't want to allow me to do Matriculation. *'You didn't let me pass'*, *'You didn't give me the confidence that I could, you didn't believe in me'* … (stops the flow of speech, quiet), there is no worse feeling than that. Especially when you are already weary from the journey, and at a time when you have returned to the correct road, and I would sit for hours on hours with my private teacher and it cost a lot of money … (pause), a sense of disappointment and complete failure. Whatever you did, it didn't succeed. And it was already then that I really 'made a break' I stopped coming to school and stopped learning math. I remember, one day I went shopping with a friend. That teacher saw me and said *'Hi, Noa'* and I said *'I really don't know you at all'*, and he said *'Aren't you Noa?'* and I said *'No'*. He had scarred me so much that … just like that, I said *'No, I don't know you at all'.* The friend that was with me was in shock.

… I'm sure that part of my learning disability is from there, that's the foundation. I believe that when you like the teacher and bond with him and the teacher understands you and gives you the proper respect, you can succeed in everything and it's not important if it's English or mathematics, or another discipline.

*Q.* Did you have an experience of that sort?

(A-9) Yes in the college. In the third year, after two difficult years, I felt that my pedagogic tutor respected me and believed in me. She told me: *'We shall find ways to bypass the difficulties'*, *'We shall find the ways for you to successfully catch up with*

*what is necessary'.* There was pleasantness in the air. She was very attentive to me... When I succeeded she knew how to show me. I was in the clouds… It was something stunning. I left with a wonderful feeling after a test lesson. There are successful experiences which are uplifting, and this was an uplifting feeling … and it was something new. This matter of sensitivity, that everyone is different, to understand that everyone needs his own way. If I spoke before of the experience of failure that I always have to battle against, then this was victory. I had no-one to conquer. It was to show myself that I could, to be victorious…. I remember that it was happiness, it was happiness. It gives you the strength to continue and to know that you are so okay, and it's something that I hadn't experienced for a long time.

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(A-10) I had so much experience of failure that I said: *'What?'* I asked myself *'Could I deserve something like this?'*, *'Is it possible that I could achieve 90 in the project?'*, *'Is it possible that you can succeed?'* … until today I have difficulty believing that I have such successful experiences…….

I always had boy and girl friends, but something in my heart … stopped and I searched all the time, *'What isn't good for you?'* and I didn't know how to define it, but I had a heavy feeling all the time. When I did the diagnosis it was very difficult for me. It made me sad, it was very difficult. It took me a long time to recover. And all this was in the first year of my special education studies. It was very, very difficult, because now I felt as if I had a stigma. I felt that I was defective.., but now it was official and you know and everybody knows … how do you begin now?

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(A-11) Graduation from the college. Wow! Wow! It was something very, very good in my life. It was a leap forwards. I had realised my dream,… whatever happened now would be a completely different chapter… I wanted to work in special education. Now it seems to me that this stems from something very emotional. It has an influence on my life on all its levels. If there is something that I want I shall always do it.

(A-12) I still want to say something to you about the primary school teacher, all that she said to me, I began to think: *'Perhaps you are really like that'* … I was only in Year 3, I didn't understand, and if the teacher told me then I was not okay.  It was like a snowball that continued to roll, and it influenced me all those years.

Was it possible that you had a learning disability and that you had no chance of succeeding? Did you think of that?

No, I didn't think so … but I'm sure because of her I … I believe that if you like the teacher you will also succeed in the discipline.  But, because she was so destructive, I didn't have a chance. All the negative experiences and all the positive experiences form the personality.  I realised my dream.  I feel good now, I'm happy.  I'm happy that I succeeded in studying.  I love my work and in general my life is good.

## 8.4 Noa's Reflective Feedback (R)

**Following the Observation of her Lesson**

*Q.* Did you have an experience of that sort?

(R-1)We began with a morning session, in which regular elements are repeated – names of children, changing the day, talking about the day and the number that is appropriate for it – for example 'day two' *[translator:* Hebrew for 'Monday'] comes after 'day one'; 'day two' is like the number two and we show two fingers.

After this we check the weather. There are children who go to look at the sky; other children replace the appropriate cards.

(R-2)Then we have regular morning songs. We welcome the children, we accompany the songs with hand movements, and then there are a number of games, connected with the parts of the body or to friendship or emotions. Today we talked about the garden which is the subject which we are studying at the moment.

The children noted vegetables that they recognise, and indicated which vegetables they like. I turned their attention to the pictures hanging on the wall, including pictures of vegetables, in order to remind them of other vegetables. It's amazing how many vegetables they know.

(R-3)I read them the story of 'Eliezer and the Carrot' (by Levine Kipnis) – a story that they already know and always enjoy hearing again.

The children joined completing the sentences which are repeated and complete the last word in the line, this is the way that they participate in the story reading. In the end we acted out Eliezer and the carrot – one child was the grandfather and each time another child arrived, another character in the story ….

(R-4)In the activity with the names, it's only recently that the children recognise their names on the cards and they hang the cards (in the correct direction) on the board – it's something regular and there is something very personal here. After the child

hangs his name and we say 'good morning', we hug each other and he goes back to sit in his place.

One child apparently has attention and concentration problems and she sat beside me.

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(R-5)Today the session was later than usual.  In addition, I added the conversation about the vegetables and the story with the activity; perhaps it was a bit too much for some of the children.

I made a connection between two things and I saw that the children were a bit effervescent.  The hour was not the regular hour and this may have had an influence.

I had the feeling that I had 'fallen on them' a bit. Some of the children participated less in the singing and sat with less patience, jumping etc.  It would be more appropriate to make this session at the regular time, at 09:00.

## An educational event in the nursery

(R-6)Recently there have been children who swear and speak rudely.  We performed an activity in which we 'threw' all the rude words into a rubbish bag.  Each child took the rude words from their mouths and we threw the rubbish bags into the waste bins and described how the lorry would come and get all the rubbish.

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(R-7)One child is especially predominant with words – he says: 'retard' etc. He says: 'I'll call my dad and he'll see you naked'.  It's really abnormal when the children come and complain, and a lot of children come, or I hear him, I take him to me and ask him: 'How do we speak in the nursery?' and he knows very well how to answer me – 'we speak nicely', 'with which words?' I ask him, and he tells me: 'pleasant words, we speak nicely'. 'Which nice words do you know?' I ask him, and he answers: 'excuse me, thank-you, please', but its like a routine that he is familiar with, and again we go and 'throw' the rude words by hand and send them into the bin – he says the word and throws it into the refuse.  I very much hope that by this process he will understand that words like 'retard' are not said in the nursery. He should say: 'I don't like that' 'I don't agree' **…**

(R-8)Another event that I would like to talk about: I have a problem that the children don't collect [things] in the nursery…. There are children who don't collect the games, and this repeats itself every day and several times a day. I collect them and talk with them about what they should do….

I hope that by positive reinforcement all the children will understand and do what they need to do. I hint to certain children and encourage them to participate in the collection of the toys. With one girl my hints did not work – for example: today I said 'You won't receive baskets' (meaning the table games which are in baskets),… She went to sit on a bench and cried very, very much. I told her: 'Noa, when you calm down and stop crying, come to me and we'll talk'. She did in fact come to me and I said to her 'You're one of the older ones in the nursery' 'you know how to be an assistant'. She of course agreed with me, but she loves everything to go just the way she wants. I thought that I would turn things upside down a bit. I let her understand that it was her responsibility…. She was an older one in the nursery; she could help me all the day. She was very happy and smiled and said that she wanted to help me. From my point of view it was quite fine that she was in the class. She got what she had out of her and afterwards when she calmed down we spoke and it was really good for her.

(R-9)I often tell them in the nursery that it's okay to cry, I don't consider the crying as something 'babyish' but it is part of the process, they cry and later when they calm down it's possible to talk and to understand. It's very important to me that they should learn the nursery's boundaries and framework. First games and enjoyment, then collecting, that's something that the children need to learn in the nursery, even if a child sometimes cries.

(R-10)We do a lot of work on the personal independence of the children: how to organise themselves properly in the lavatories, washing hands with soap, tying their shoe-laces, putting on socks. I give them the sense that they are big and independent, to put their coats on by themselves. These matters are very important for them. They gives them a sense of independence, success and pleasure.

**Feed-back concerning her work in the class, when she began her work**

(R-11)I worked as a replacement teacher for three months, replacing a teacher who was on pregnancy leave. I was a class mentor a regular Year 2 class. It was wonderful. I really loved frontal teaching. I loved teaching the different disciplines; it interested me and the level of Year 2. It interested me a lot. I loved the children. I enjoyed coping with the children who had difficulties, and I felt that I knew well what to offer them.

(R-12)I made an individual programme for two children who had difficulties and found ways to make it easier for them. I taught homeland studies, bible studies – and everything according to the curriculum. When it was necessary to test them, I made quite simple examinations, easy, and I specifically prepared them for the examinations so that they wouldn't have any unnecessary disappointment. I remember myself, it was my personal trauma, examinations were not something pleasant, and they were something that was very difficult to pass. Until today I can feel it, and I didn't want my pupils to have that experience. I wanted to make it easy for them and also to demonstrate that there are other ways to see that the child knows.

(R-13)In my opinion, a teacher can also know without an examination – using games, a conversation, asking them orally, and participation in the lesson – if the child knows. I was very meticulous concerning homework, even when I gave homework we had already talked about the answers in class, so that they would not encounter new material in their homework.

(R-14)I feel that my consideration as a teacher for the child and the class experience is important, ensuring that there should not be a stressed and threatening atmosphere. I maintain the boundaries and the rules but exert much effort to make the studies fun. I also want each child to have an experience of success, at least one thing a day that he succeeds with and enjoys doing. It might be in singing, playing, I handed out a lot of

'similes', stickers, and I write good things about the child in the parents' communication exercise book.

(R-15)There is no chance that a child in Year 2 will feel as I felt as a pupil in Year 2. A child who had a difficulty came to sit beside me at the table, which was considered by the pupils as something big, physical closeness, contact.  A child who had difficult writing problems, I did it together with him: 'You do a short line and I'll do two lines'. It was so difficult for him to hold the pencil and to also look at the board.  I gave him a lot of reinforcements 'I'm proud of you', 'you succeeded', 'it's nice to write together' …

(R-16)I tried very hard to relate to the children's strong parts – a child who was good at football etc.  After three months I was forced to part from them because the teacher returned.  It was very sad for everyone. I found it very interesting and fun; I had become much attached to the children and the parents.  In those three months, although I was really in my first year of teaching work, I really didn't experience difficulties.

(R-17)Before I began to teach I told the head-teacher that there was a problem because I don't teach mathematics. The teacher of a parallel class taught my class mathematics and I taught her class comprehension. I said that I would not take the responsibility to teach something that I couldn't…  It wasn't a question of making an effort, it was simply impossible.
In contrast, to teach comprehension was wonderful for me – the head-teacher greatly respected the way in which I taught and that was something that I was good at… Mathematics is so impossible, even in daily living simple things are very complicated for me.... I won't teach things that I do not do well. They'll profit from things that I do well. They liked me a lot at school and there was no problem.

## 8.5 Interview with Mira – the Autobiographical Story (A)

(A-1)I was born in Kibbutz H.  I'm now 29 years old.  We . . . my parents are divorced. I was in Class 3. We are three children from my mother and father.  I have another 2 brothers from my father.  My mother remarried and she has no additional children. The divorce was very difficult and from an early age I was educated in the school at the kibbutz, and from an early age they knew that I had a problem.  Until I was an adult nothing was done about it.

(A-2) …I used to go to a S.E. [Special Education] teacher in the kibbutz, I used to meet with her, do all sorts of work with colours and handicrafts, you know... I didn't really learn and this was until Class 6, it went on like that. In Class 7 I was transferred to the boarding school with all the other children and then I studied there with them in Classes 7 and 8.  I accumulated a gap (in learning) and so I had to transfer to a more technical school because I had a gap in my studies… then they decided that I needed to move.

*Q.      Who decided you had to move?*

(A-3)It's because I'd got behind.  I don't know, the adults, perhaps the education committee, perhaps consulting with my mother.  I didn't have any diagnosis made; it was just according to an opinion.  They decided that I couldn't continue with everyone and it would be better for me to learn a profession and so I went to study in the technical school…. I studied Classes 9 and 10 there. At first it was really fun there were other pupils who also had all sorts of problems, so we were equal and I wasn't so pressed by the studies.  It was nice, fun; a burden had been lifted from me.

*Q.      What burden?*

(A-4)The burden I'd had in the boarding school that I'd had to make an effort to learn; what's worse, I hadn't succeeded.  I was sent to special classes and all sorts of arrangements so that I'd succeed, yes, so that I could go on with everyone without any special means.  Socially it was O.K.  from the point of view of studies I didn't feel good there. In effect I didn't achieve anything there (the technical school). I completed two years and then I decided  . . . I didn't decide, apparently they understood at the school that it wasn't any good, so I was transferred to a school at G.H.

Q.       *You say 'they understood', who do you mean?*

(A-5)It's strange I don't know who it was.  It was either the education committee or the institutions committee that they had there, in consultation with my parents. And when I say they transferred me then . . . my mother's remarried and her husband kept suggesting that I should go to the school in G. H.  He knew the school there and thought it was a place where I could progress.  It's a large   school and he knew it was a good school and that they did the Matriculation there. The transfer to G. H. meant having to sleep away from home so until Class 10, I wasn't willing to listen to anything about it. From a social point of view, I always belonged to the group and I never had a problem, even when I studied at another school, it didn't fail me and I was never rejected.

(A-6) I finally understood that it was better for me to transfer to G. H.  It was a very serious recommendation.  I saw that my entire year group there was with L.D. like me and they were a really great crowd, quality kids and then I saw that it was different from T. where they had a lower level. At last, I wasn't so special and different. I continued there for two years. I left there with a final diploma and in the end I didn't do the Matriculation there. In retrospect I understand that I should have gone there long before, I lived with a few girls in a foster family and we had a wonderful relationship and I felt good there.  It was great fun.

(A-7) Mira describes her experience during her military service…

(A-8)After the army I return to the kibbutz. I had a boyfriend for three years.  I was with him in Tel Aviv and then I worked in all sorts of jobs. I forgot, before that I qualified for my discharge grant, by working for it as a waitress.  It was fun, a good experience.  Then I separated from him and I went back home, broken-hearted.  At first I said: I won't be here at the kibbutz, but I'd calmed down and it was good, a sort of serenity and calm. It did me nothing but good. I worked at all sorts of workplaces. I traveled to India for 3 months with friends, I wouldn't go back there – it was so 'grubby' and then when I returned home and everything calmed down, I decided to go and study.

(A-9)    I've missed out an important part. After I was discharged from the army, before I flew off and worked in Tel Aviv, I'd decided to go and have a diagnosis made, to find out what I had.  Because before this, they hadn't pointed to something and said: O.K. – she's problematic – but what's wrong with her?  I was very interested to know, it was a long process because it cost a lot of money. I didn't know . . . .as though I didn't know.   It didn't occur to me that I had dyslexia, dysgraphia or something like that even in mathematics… I just thought it wasn't for me.  I was in a completely different situation.  My whole self-esteem was very low, we'd continue, we'd manage.  People manage with worse things than that and I would too… and then when I went for the first time to do the diagnosis I left there broken-hearted, worse than I'd been when I arrived there.  Because what they told me, the whole diagnosis was very frustrating. It lasted many hours. I was given all sorts of things to read and to make associations, to start to read English which was completely 'double-Dutch' for me, and wasn't suitable for me.

(A-10)This diagnosis showed me that I had dysgraphia, dyslexia and more, a lot more serious things.  Each diagnosis showed me that my situation was very bad.  And the recommendations at the end were that there was no point in my studying for the Matriculation, that it would be better not to do it. The conversation with the examiner went like this: 'There's no sense in your going to study for a first degree', 'You've got no chance of succeeding' 'It   would be better if you went to learn a profession, that's the only way you can fit in'.

(A-11)At that time I thought that there were lots of professions that don't need that sort of studies and that I would manage with that. Not connected with reading and writing. I don't have a problem with that… but my feeling was very bad!! As though on the one hand I thought to myself that I could do  more, I'm very ambitious and also stubborn, so that I went on from there. On the other hand they hadn't told me anything new  since I didn't think that I would amount to anything special . . . perhaps I needed to accept the truth internally and to adjust to it.  It's not far from what I had thought, perhaps it's better to be realistic and perhaps I was thinking too far.  So I got over it.

(A-12) A sort of very, very low confidence…  A very low feeling…  I was very angry.  I was mad at everyone around me. And then I remembered again, all my conversations I'd had with my parents and especially with my mother, because she was closer to me concerning my studies, why hadn't they done the  diagnosis before? Why didn't they think about me with regard to my studies? Why and why and why? There was a lot of blame for those around me...But, how had I reached this age and now I had to find out what was wrong with me and they already knew and had done diagnoses . . . it's not as though I'm talking about a period when it was so . . . as though . . . I was very bitter, very  . . . Especially against the system, against them, for myself and for the kibbutz.  It was as though they had brushed everything under the carpet.  And, actually . . . I can't get angry.  Because perhaps it was a period like that . . . .for example in      primary school they used to send me to study with the Special Education teacher, to 'study' and that was O.K., because that was what they used to do. But I demanded that my parents give me more esteem than they did.  I don't know it's all the anger that I soaked up all the time . . . and then it all came out because after the diagnosis I began to think how had this whole process of deterioration been possible.

(A-13)I thought that it was shocking.  I don't know if I can blame my parents a bit that they allowed it to happen.  On the other hand that was the accepted behaviour; the society at that time didn't know anything else and it wasn't so customary to do diagnoses.  But I expected more respect from them and more willingness to fight. What happened there? Until now I hadn't known what I had. Actually, all those years I had gone around in circles and not learnt anything.

(A-14)…I was very disappointed.  It was actually the first   disappointment that I had had from my parents in that area. Perhaps it was more comfortable, to direct it to my parents, it had a sort of logic and was a sort of denial because they should have been worried about my education. and asked the correct questions, and on the other hand there was much which stemmed from me – perhaps I wasn't mature enough to study, perhaps it wasn't the right stage and it was the beginning of my process of acceptance – I was less important to them.  It was easier for them to rely on the kibbutz system, on the school  system, when it did the right things and we the parents have nothing we can do. I went through a process of acceptance.  Those were the first stages: How had it happened?   How had it been made possible? I reached an understanding . . . no, I only reached the thought . . . how had it happened that I'd reached this age and I don't know this and that and that . . . with regard to my studies.  Why hadn't it been important enough for my parents, that I don't know enough Math and English and why did they in effect, give up on me.  They didn't give up on me they gave up on my capability.

(A-15)After I underwent the diagnosis and all that it involved I decided that I'd go to study, that I'd try to complete my Matriculation.  I'm stubborn and I could do it.  I'd continue.  I don't remember how I began to study who helped me. I had a very, very good girlfriend from the school at G.H. and she's the one who found the school for discharged soldiers where they study for the Matriculation. She's  dyslectic  and  I'm dysgraphia and we were good for one another. I went there and it made a very good impression.  At first I was shocked by it.  'You can study and you'll succeed'.  All that encouragement and belief in me that flew at me –it seemed unrealistic to me.  All in

all they don't know me, they don't know who I am and where I come from and what I know and what I don't know. They're suffering from an illusion. They'll have to open their eyes – these were my thoughts after I saw the place. It seemed to me more than magical, to go and do my Matriculation now.

(A-16)I'll try, I'm confident that I'll succeed. Worse comes to worse, I'll prove I can't, I'm not successful, that I can't succeed and that I've got a certain limit, so I'll be able to internalize it and accept it, but at least I'll have tried. And then I began to agree to all the Matriculation exams. For two years I studied and did the entire Matriculation. And it was stunning, absolutely stunning from my point of view. It was a correction of all my studies that I'd ever done or not done, during all those years. During those two years I made up all I'd ……and I learnt about myself, what sort of student I was, what sort of learner, how I handle studying, what's best for me and what's less good for me and many things became crystallized for me. I matured a lot. I accepted the dyslexia and dysgraphia that I had more. I learnt how to relate to them. That it's not that terrible and that there are other people like me who come there and succeed well, that I too can succeed and then my approach regarding myself and the lessons from my studies became better grounded.

(A-17)For the Matriculation exams a diagnosis by a clinical psychologist was necessary so I had a diagnosis done and after the tests I felt as though I took the results much better. Perhaps because I knew how I had studied better. Now I participated a bit in my studies and my confidence had risen – it was easier for me to accept the results of this diagnosis … I'm not so stupid as I had thought I learnt about myself, beginning with the fact that I was capable, that I had a lot of determination, motivation and that a lot of obstinacy was necessary. Right down to the smallest things: how best to summarize an exam, to memorize and trivial matters that every learner knows. I got to know my memory, I hadn't had exams before and I hadn't had to cope with my memory, but in the Matriculation I had a defective memory. It's part of the dysgraphia, to learn to cope with memory.

(A-18)It was a tremendous revelation.  In effect, it was knowing that I was able to do it and that I was progressing in the right direction.  It was a great achievement  that I had completed the Matriculation. I had achieved the unbelievable, the unexpected… My mother never told me to leave, to give up, that it wasn't worthwhile. Inside, I didn't expect it; I didn't think that I could reach what I had achieved.  I did the Matriculation in two years and once I understood – that there was a light at the end of the tunnel -then I thought that if I'd succeeded with the Matriculation, why shouldn't I go on and study for a first degree.  From the second diagnosis I understood that I wasn't as stupid as it had been possible to understand from the first diagnosis. And then it had also seemed like an illusion to study for a first degree. I joked with my friends at school that we would sometime become teachers, it remained a joke.  Then I began to investigate things – I wanted to be an art teacher or an art therapist and special education interested me, although it was funny.

(A-19)It's funny for me, for my mother for all those around me.  We joked about me as an L.D. who had experienced special education, that I should be a teacher? How could I write on the blackboard? I began to look for a suitable place to study. When I came to 'Gordon' I had an entrance interview with M and she gave me the feeling that I didn't need to worry, if I needed assistance I could get it and that's what I wanted, that's what I was looking for… I always said it wouldn't be terrible if I didn't succeed, because I didn't believe in myself very much.  As my expectations rose, the need for confidence was greater.  So that when I decided to go and study, the fear of failure and of falling was very great and a person such as M. who agreed to help was very important. So, that's it; I went to study. . .

(A-20)When I went to study, the recognition of my L.D. became very acceptable to me, well-founded and out in the open. At first I even perhaps exaggerated…  I acknowledged myself!  Today I announce this less.  I think that it was like a test that I had to pass…  At first I panicked a bit, because this was me, but on the other hand, she said it very nicely: 'it fitted a certain stage in your life, now you're at another stage.  You've finished a complete Matriculation, you've succeeded, you've been accepted, now you're a student and you can open a new page'. Afterwards I accepted

this – which it wasn't fitting at this stage.  At this stage I had to establish myself, to push myself forward, to survive (laughs).

(A-21)All the time I said: 'Yes, there's no problem. . . ' but it always seemed an illusion to me.  Because I thought, how can I write on the blackboard? At first I had to persuade the Head of the Special Education stream at the    college   who   asked   me what I would do in class … to persuade her that there wouldn't be a problem.  I could say, in front of everyone, it's possible to print, it was correct but I didn't really believe it inside.

…I said to myself: 'Worse comes to worse, if I can't be a teacher, at least I'll have  a first degree and that's funny because during all the studies here, from the    beginning, you have to go into the classroom and to practice teaching.  You    can't    avoid    it. This experience was excellent for me, because I consolidated something real for myself, from inside, that I could cope with the dysgraphia   in teaching.  I coped, the coping was important.

(A-22)…I found out that I could do it and that I'm capable.  In effect I don't have any problem in getting where I want to. What had at first been an illusion was proved to be correct. It's a wonderful feeling.  Like getting up in the morning and saying 'Wow! I did it!' I didn't even notice that I'd done it because of all the pushing I had to do and the efforts to achieve it. As though I'd climbed up a mountain (I looked at it) I did it and I can continue on. It was very emotional.  It really was something  that  I  hadn't believed that I could achieve.  I believed and yet didn't believe that I could achieve it. It's like the stories that you hear on the radio and television about people who have succeeded.  I understood that this was something great from the reactions of people around me. I had done something which was highly respected and which was much valued, and that empowered me even more from the point of view of confidence etc. That it's no longer important what I do.  I've already proved to myself that I  can,  I've proved to myself that I can learn.  Now it only remains to round off the corners, now I can polish my subjects as a teacher.

…My mother has supported me all the way, and she's very relevant to the path that I've taken… my boyfriend who helped me with my studies and supported me and there were other people in my surroundings.

## 8.6 Mira - Reflective Feedback (R)

### Following the Observation of her Lesson

(R-1)The lesson was a language lesson, it's not reading, language is more fitting so I called it language.  I prefer to work with them in a groups rather than frontally. I had a bitter experience with frontal work pages. It's a retarded population. At first I tried several times to introduce work pages. They can't take more than two work pages. It's a great effort, they need a lot of assistance and it's very difficult for them.  So I've become accustomed to working with groups, using games, which is really more interesting for them and attracts their attention.

(R-2)They know all these games and they've played them a lot – dominos, fours, memory and all sorts. I sometimes vary the activity by introducing work pages, so that it won't be the same all the time. The lesson should go as I planned it because they've done even more, finishing all that I had planned.  Usually they don't reach so much. They've sat for more than half an hour concentrating and they've worked well…I divide them into two levels…  The assistant helps me a lot; she sat together with the lower level group.  If it's another assistant, she would find it difficult.

(R-3)Each pupil had three pairs of rhymes.  This goal was achieved.  Although there were disciplinary problems, there always are, they're all the time testing the limits.. . testing their environment.  It makes it very difficult for me.  I try to be as consistent as possible with them, to relate to them as adults and in effect all this behaviour doesn't influence me.  Some of it was to impress you, but we also recognize it from other days. From the moment that that behaviour began, I understood that I had to try to finish, because it was difficult for them.  They lost their concentration, it was too long.

(R-4)…there was the pupil who left the lesson,  he's a pupil who's going home today after staying for a month in the dormitories because his  mother  was  abroad.  Today she lands at 4.00 and he's already very excited.  He asked me if he could go out and work with the maintenance man.  That's what he usually does, even when the others

go home and he stays.  Today because he was so emotional, he asked me before the end of the lesson and I agreed to allow him to go out.

(R-5)…It's all sorts of things that I hadn't planned but this happens in the field and I responded to what happened as needed, while I was working, I didn't even notice what the assistant was doing…I was so busy with my group, with the rhymes and I didn't notice the second group. Dividing attention is very difficult for me. I have to be with them all the time, to motivate them and it's difficult for them to work alone and at the same time to pay attention and put an eye on the second group. I find it terribly difficult and I need to improve this.  Meanwhile it bothers me terribly...

(R-6)Each group is occupied with things that are important for them.  I have a very individual-oriented approach for each one.  It makes it easier for them, so that each of them can strengthen what they need to, and it allows me to see each one and individually reach out to each one. Personal approach is what is very important here. They need it and for me it is also important.  The other points are my relationship with them which is very strong.  They've finally begun to get used to me.  It took them a very long time. These pupils had a lot of transitions. It was very difficult to create trust between us and building confidence was very difficult. I think that I have acquired their trust and our relationship is very, very good.

(R-7)…They listen very well.  All in all they create a very good atmosphere in the classroom because of the communication between us. I can sit with one specific pupil, and it doesn't cause envy for the others, they know that each of them has their own special corner.  They know that I'll reach them all; that I don't discriminate between them.  Each of them receives their equal share of attention.  I've tried hard to develop their speaking, so that they could come and speak to me, so that I won't have to hear all sorts of things from the instructors or others …To come and tell me personally and that's very important for me and that's something important that they have with me.

(R-8)..It's a complex relationship (with the assistant), she's just been on a long vacation and already  before she left I had wanted to have a conversation with her because I felt we were on the verge of something.  It was very difficult for me with her.  I felt that she was very strict with them and in my opinion she reached extreme situations with them. For example: she would chase after a pupil, physically pursuing them, or threatening them: 'if you don't do so and so, I'll . . . ', but   really extreme and they too …They didn't want her touch them: 'She touches us'. There's a lot relating to the physical field here…  Even when a pupil comes and taps me on the shoulder, he knows its not accepted and he knows that I'll react to it, and with her it was very extreme.  I hope it will be O, K, and if not I'll have to speak with her again.

(R-9)… She must be less aggressive with them.  A little less hostility....  It's very, very important for the tranquility of the class, its very important for them, you can really feel it.  But she believes in it, that you have to be strong with them, to hold them fast and I think its also possible without that.  Sometimes they exaggerate, they shout.  It's not something that's meant to be… they should be quieter, calmer. You have to try to make more tranquility, calmly in the classroom. All in all my relationship with her is good when she's in the classroom it's quiet.  I know that I have someone to rely on, she knows everything and helps me a lot and despite everything I trust her.

(R-10)….I've gone through many stages on the way.  It was also very frightening at first … My acceptance here was all very quick, without much deliberation, I flowed straight into the stream of things.  At first I spend a month with their previous teacher, who was with them for a short time...  The fact that we worked together for a month was confusing for them.  It made my entry slightly difficult. Apart from that my entry was slightly frightening, since at the beginning I had to do all the diagnoses and the Personal Learning Programmes by myself it was a very, very heavy burden.  I also had to begin with a new class, to gain control of the class – what can I

say…Everything was new. There were all sorts of little things – until today I still have the same deliberations – also different deliberations. There's a constant conflict as to whether what I'm doing is correct. And there are sometimes a lot of guilt feelings regarding certain things which I have done according to my taste and not according to the way I was meant to do . . . there's learning all the time, but its terribly frightening at first . . .my whole entry.

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(R-11)They're at the age of adolescence and you can see it clearly in their outbursts. And in addition there's the retardation and it's all together . . . so what should I respond to? Where should I put the emphasis? Should I answer them very strictly? or more moderately? Should I ever answer in a more radical manner because maybe that would just stir them up more? All sorts of deliberations like these which are troubling. But there is no correct or incorrect answer here. At first I used to mull over things a lot, they had very wild behaviour and all the time they tested me. And I had a great debate with myself – is this behaviour connected to something that I'm doing? to my interaction with them? Perhaps something in my behaviour, the way in which I function with them, causes them to act this way? It often happens between people. Then I understood that it wasn't only with me but that they had behaved the same way with all the teachers…

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(R-12)They've gone through a long journey since they've known me. They act in a more respectable way. They've improved a lot in their studies so I would really like to bring them to the stage where they wouldn't need to jibe and to direct their behaviour to getting more positive attention and not negative.

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(R-13) We went for the first time to participate in a meeting at M.I., following my long preparations with them and with the pupils in M.I. After the first encounter, I left with my head held high . . .smiling! We'd made a circle there and played acquaintance games. They behaved  excellently, they acted very maturely and expectably, they answered fittingly,  they adapted themselves to the population.  It
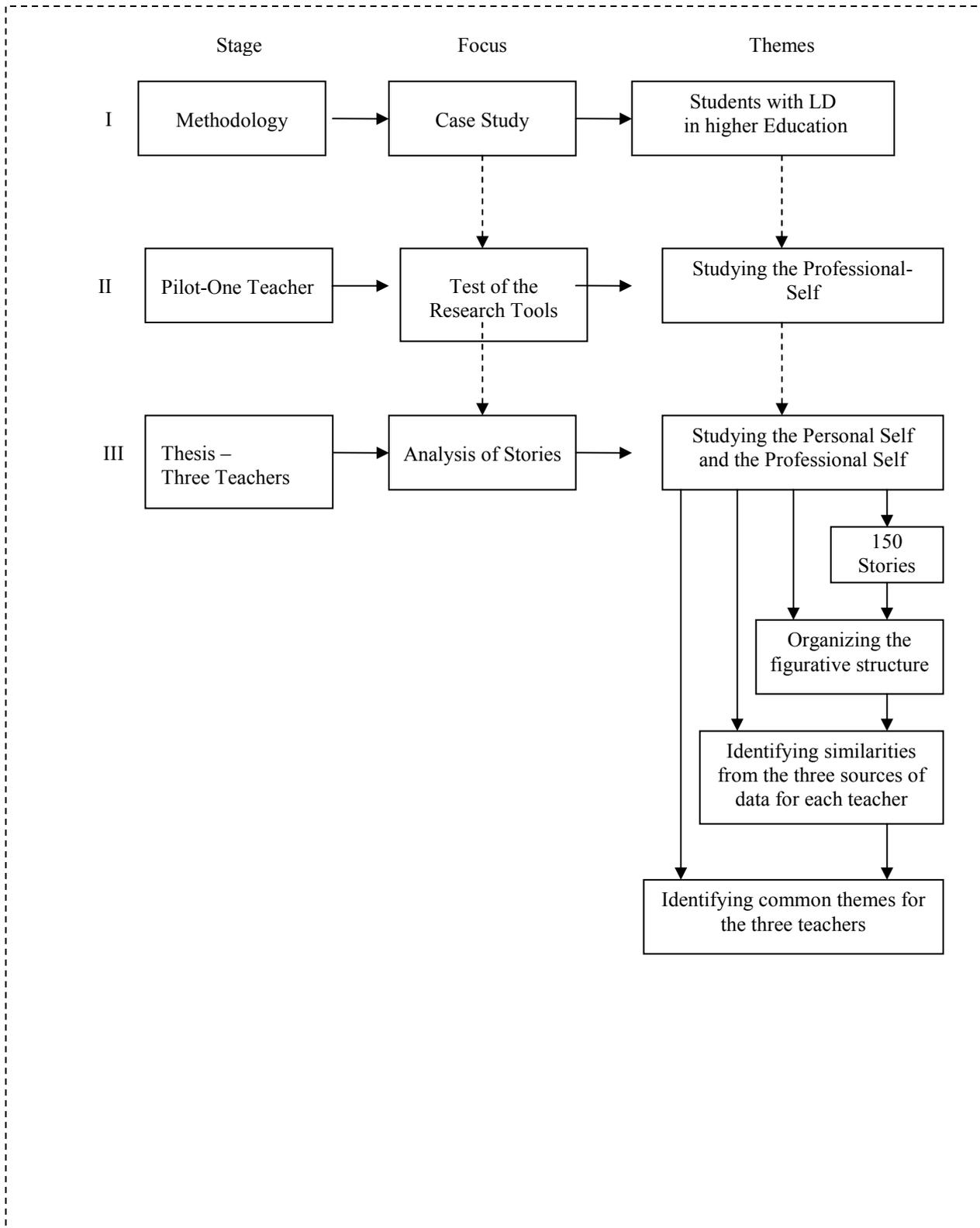
was stunning.  I left there very satisfied . . .I have where to reach for – they can achieve even more and adapt  themselves.  Perhaps we don't realize their potential, but it's a fact, they've reached a further level and they integrate, it's not necessary to make to remarks to them o many     , no need to deal with disciplinary problems.  It's very good.

(R-14) I think that they have matured a lot, and in their relationship with me they have learnt that they have less need to prove themselves and can be more   themselves and then when everything is calm there is more room to develop.

(R-15) There is a lot to learn and a lot is acquired with experience.  I still ponder a lot with myself, things that are still not closed. That's the deliberating side, it's a good facet, very good, because an educator should know how to criticise himself, not severely but there's a good middle way, to criticise himself and to see where he's been mistaken and whether he was wrong and to analyze what he does, himself as objectively as possible.

(R-16) There was the performance that we produced at Purim *[The Festival of Lots]* . . . I think it was very exciting…  We prepared imitations of teachers and instructors. We worked very intensively for two  weeks.  The responsibility was all theirs.  It was very good to see.  We reached the day of Purim and I was left with four pupils and only two of them appeared in the play.  It was a bit disappointing but those two that remained did want to appear. They went up onto the stage with all the props and did all the imitations. They appeared in front of the parents, and the instructors and everyone were there, a large audience. They did it really well. I think it was a very good achievement and we proved to everyone that we could do it.  It's also a small achievement and there are others like it during the five months we've been together.

# Procedure and Stages of the Study

| Stage | | Focus | | Themes |
|-------|---|-------|---|--------|
| I | Methodology | → Case Study | → | Students with LD in higher Education |
| II | Pilot-One Teacher | → Test of the Research Tools | → | Studying the Professional-Self |
| III | Thesis – Three Teachers | → Analysis of Stories | → | Studying the Personal Self and the Professional Self |

150 Stories

Organizing the figurative structure

Identifying similarities from the three sources of data for each teacher

Identifying common themes for the three teachers

I