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The Professional Image of the Kindergarten Teacher in Israel

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<u>Abstract</u>

The children of today are the adults of tomorrow as well as the leaders of tomorrow. In early childhood the foundations for learning and values are assimilated, the initial knowledge is established, and the attitude towards the self and others is shaped. Therefore, the profession of the kindergarten teacher is among the most important professions in the world, if not the most important one. Kindergarten teachers are responsible for the shaping of the young generation at the most critical age, when the child is subject to shaping and influence. Not for nothing is the word 'garden' embedded in the name of the profession, since the kindergarten teacher nurtures and develops the child who grows up to be a citizen and the future adult. A professional kindergarten teacher will encourage the child to be creative, will emphasize the child's strong points, will enable the child to investigate and develop areas of interest, and will constitute for the child a figure of example and inspiration. A professional kindergarten teacher will be a model of value-based and social behavior for the child, will instill in the child personal, interpersonal, and universal values, will teach the child diverse skills, including the skills of the 21st century, will establish the areas of knowledge, and will inspire in the child curiosity and love of learning. A professional kindergarten teacher will do all this in an experiential and creative manner, with activities and hands-on experience tailored to early childhood, and thus the image of the kindergarten teacher will be engraved in the child's memory for all time.

It would seem, from the aforementioned statements, that the profession of the kindergarten teacher is supposed to be the profession with the highest image, the profession most desired by young people and with the highest social recognition. However, the situation in actuality is opposite – the image of the kindergarten teacher in society is low.

The present research study examined the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israeli society from the perspective of (1) the kindergarten teachers themselves, (2) the students of kindergarten education in three groups: first year students, third year students, and students in the program of the training for kindergarten education of academically

educated workers, and (3) the parents of the kindergarten children who are the mirror of the kindergarten activity.

The objective of the present research study is to know and to understand the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israel society and to present the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israel society from the viewpoint of the parents of the kindergarten children, the students of early childhood education at the start and the end of their studies and in a program for the re-training of academically educated people, and the kindergarten teachers themselves. This population is the mirror of the activity in the kindergarten. The research study presents the opinion of Israeli society about the kindergarten teacher.

The review of the literature addresses a variety of aspects in the kindergarten teacher's role. For the purpose of the present research study, I chose main aspects, such as instructional aspects in the kindergarten teacher's role – the kindergarten teacher as a teacher, managerial and organization aspects – the kindergarten teacher as a manager, educational and value-based aspects – the kindergarten teacher as an educational leaders, counseling aspects – the kindergarten teacher as a counselor for the parents, and caring aspects, the response to physiological needs – the kindergarten teacher as a caregiver. Conclusions are therefore drawn about the participants' perception of the kindergarten teacher's different roles, what is dominant and what composes the image.

In this research study I address three main meaningful characteristics that characterize the educator's profession: the knowledge, skills, and values and how they are expressed in the teacher's different roles and what influences the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israeli society, in order to find out ways to improve the image.

The research sample included 197 participants: 65 parents of child in kindergarten (33%), 22 first year teaching students (11.2%), 28 last year teaching students (14.2%), 15 students in the academic training track (7.6%), and 67 actual kindergarten teachers (34%).

The research hypotheses are:

1. There are factors that differentiate the image of a kindergarten teacher in Israeli society.

   1.1. The image of the kindergarten teacher is perceived differently in relation to the various roles of the profession.

   1.2. The image of the kindergarten teacher differs according to the research groups: students, kindergarten teachers, parents.

   1.3. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by age.

   1.4. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by gender.

   1.5. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by economic situation.

   1.6. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by religion.

   1.7. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by the level of religiosity.

   1.8. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by education.

   1.9. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated in the group of kindergarten teachers according to the different seniority in their work.

   1.10. The image of kindergarten teachers differs within the group of kindergarten teachers according to the socio-economic area in which the kindergarten is located.

   1.11. The kindergarten teachers' image is differentiated for a parent who knows kindergarten teachers personally, different from parents who have one child up to three.

   1.12. The kindergarten teachers' image is differentiated within the student group: between first-year education students and third-year education students and academic training courses.

   1.13. The kindergarten teacher's rating is differentiated by the various groups.

   1.14. The motives for the selection of the profession will be differentiated by the various groups.

   1.15. The motives for the selection of the profession will be differentiated within the student group: between first-year education students, and third-year education students and academic training courses.

The main research findings are that the first hypothesis was partially confirmed and partially disconfirmed. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated relative to the different roles. Nine hypotheses were confirmed: the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated according to research group, the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated according to age, the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated according to gender, the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated according to religion, the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated according to level of education, the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated in the group of kindergarten teachers according to seniority, the ranking of the profession of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated according to the different groups, the motives of the choice of the profession of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated according to the different groups, and the motives for the choice of the profession of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated in the different groups of students. Five hypotheses were disconfirmed: the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated according to the respondent's economic situation, the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated according to the level of religiosity, and in the group of the kindergarten teachers the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated according to the socioeconomic region where the kindergarten is situated, the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated in the group of parents – according to the degree of familiarity with the kindergarten teacher, the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated among parents who have one to three children, and the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated in the subgroups in the group of students.

The main conclusions are that it is necessary to reduce the gap between what the individual thinks about the kindergarten teacher and the kindergarten teacher's social image and media image. It is necessary to take action to improve the image, beginning with the kindergarten teachers themselves, to develop their awareness and to build a nationwide constellation of kindergarten teachers that through professional image advisers will act to change the image in the different districts. In addition, the profession should emphasize in its name the aspect of the teacher since they have been trained for this. The topic of the image should be worked on with students in the training process, who should be recruited for activism on the topic. Digital media should be used intensively as a tool for the dissemination of the positive activity in the kindergartens.

To conclude, the importance of the present research study is that it calls for the promotion of the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israeli society, addressing the kindergarten as an early childhood teacher and not teachers in general, and describing the complexity of the kindergarten teacher's position, while emphasizing the uniqueness of the profession. Furthermore, the research study proposes a way to change and improve the professional image of the kindergarten teacher.

Introduction

The topic of the present research study is the image of the kindergarten teachers in Israel. Kotler and Fox (1995) define the concept of *image* as the constellation of the sum of all the beliefs, ideas, and impressions a person holds about a certain object. According to this definition, it is possible to define the objective of the present research study as an attempt to reveal the sum of the beliefs, ideas, and impressions that parents, kindergarten teachers, and students of teaching have about the profession of the kindergarten teacher. This research study will attempt to divide the image into its components and to understand what the prevailing image about kindergarten teachers is and what it is built from and thus to attempt to propose a way to advance and improve this image.

This research study was carried out in Israel. The topic was chosen on the background of a complex period in which the teaching profession in general and the profession of the kindergarten teacher in particular have been hit hard by the media and society and in actuality there is a shortage of teachers and kindergarten teachers and the quality of those who turn to the teaching profession is low. The very low image of the profession influences the criteria of acceptance into the colleges of teaching. Conversely, in this period there is increasing awareness of the importance of early childhood as a critical age with significant influences on the individual and society. In other words, on the one hand there is increased recognition of the importance and necessity of the profession, while on the other hand the image of the profession of the kindergarten teacher is very low.

The examination of the image of the profession in society indicates that the outlooks of other people about kindergarten teachers and the groups to which they belong embody a wide range of psychological processes. Researchers present different theories to explain the connections between the personal image and the social image and social affiliation (Bourdieu, 2005; Brown, 1988; Brown, 1995; Crompton, 1998; Ellemers, Spears, & St Doosje, 1999; Farah Bidjari, 2011; Hall & Langton, 2006; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Krauss & Hartman, 1994; Lacan, 1977; Moscovici, 2001).

The understanding of the concept of the social image and the way in which the image develops will help us to understand the image of the kindergarten teacher and to find ways to promote the image. The topic of the status of the kindergarten teacher has scarcely been researched, and on the topic of the image of the kindergarten teacher there are barely any researches and publications. This topic is very close to my heart, both as a former kindergarten teacher (I managed a kindergarten for about twenty years) and as a trainer of kindergarten teachers over the past decade. The profession is not recognized and often there is condescension, and even surprise, regarding the duration of the period of studies, about four years. There is negative media attention as well as negative publicity, and only very few, those who know the profession of the kindergarten teacher from up close, are aware of the considerable effort and professionalism required for this role. In contrast, many address only the low work hours relative to the other professions and the many vacations. As a supporter of students in the process of their training, I feel how they become aware of this attitude and even the ingratitude towards the profession and accept this submissively. The goal of this work is to create awareness and to create a change in the image.

The theoretical part is built of four chapters. In the first chapter, I address the importance and uniqueness of the profession of the kindergarten teacher, I present research studies and reports from Israel and around the world that emphasize the importance of early childhood education, and I describe the status of early childhood education in Israel.

In the second chapter, I present the profile of the kindergarten teacher in Israel. I describe the role definition according to the Ministry of Education, I present the different aspects in the kindergarten teacher's work: instructional aspects in the kindergarten teacher's role – the kindergarten teacher as a teacher, managerial and organizational aspects – the kindergarten teacher as a manager, educational and value-based aspects – the kindergarten teacher as an educational leader, counseling aspects – the kindergarten teacher as a counselor for the parents, and caring aspects, the response to physiological needs – the kindergarten teacher as a caregiver. At the end of the chapter, I describe in short the process of training of the kindergarten teachers in Israel.

In the third chapter I attempt to explain concepts related to the image: what is the image, what is the self-image, what is the self-identity, how are the professional identity and professional image created, and what is the difference between them. I address the topic of the image from a sociological aspect and review articles and theories on the topic. Then I focus on the teaching profession and its image in Israel and around the world.

In the fourth and last chapter of the theoretical part, I review articles addressing models of media and their influence on the reality and the influence of the mass media on the teacher's image and its representation in the media in Israel.

The research literature, the many reports, and the documents of directives of the Ministry of Education indicate the complexity of the multifaceted role of the kindergarten teacher. The profession entails a wide variety of roles and considerable responsibility in many diverse fields: learning and teaching, management, organization, education, counseling, design, care, nutrition, and so on, and in order to fill every role the kindergarten teacher is required to have knowledge, skills, and values in every domain.

On this basis, the research questionnaire was constructed on a Likert scale of 1-6, which presents the respondents' perception about each one of the main roles according to the respondent's opinion: as the respondent feels that society perceives and as presented in the media. In addition, the questionnaire included questions on the motives of the choice of the profession and on the ranking of the professions according to their importance.

In the chapter of the research methodology I present the main research question: What is the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israel society and what affects it? The research hypotheses address the image of the kindergarten teachers as differentiated according to different variables (age, sex, level of education, etc.). The research hypotheses engage in the differentiation between the groups and subgroups in the image of the kindergarten teacher, in the motives of the choice of the profession, and in the ranking of the profession relative to other professions. Then I present the research instrument, a questionnaire, built of three different parts. The first part examines the

kindergarten teacher's image according to the different roles in the eyes of the parents, the kindergarten teachers, and the students. The second part examines the reason for the choice of the profession, and the third part examines the ranking of the profession relative to other professions. Every part will differentiate between the three different groups: kindergarten teachers, parents, and students, in order to create a profile of the kindergarten teacher in the eyes of the three relevant groups, the parents, the students of education, and the kindergarten teachers themselves and in the subgroups, the first year students, the end of the studies students, and the academic re-training students. The use of different groups of students will facilitate the understanding of the contribution of the training process. In addition, additional variables were examined, such as the degree of familiarity with the profession, religion, sex, and so on. Every question is presented in three ways – in the eyes of the respondent, in the eyes of society, and in the eyes of the media. In this way, I collect the respondents' impression about what others think about this profession and this in order to extend the picture of the image.

The chapter of the research findings presents the analysis of the research sample and description of the distribution of the sociodemographic characteristics of all the respondents in the research. The reliability of the research is examined according to Cronbach's alpha and then the findings are analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure the distribution of the frequencies in each one of the kindergarten teacher's roles and the distribution of the frequencies of the motives of the choice of the profession of the kindergarten teacher. Then the next part presents the distribution of the means of the ranking of six professions by social status/prestige. Then inferential statistics is performed and the research findings are analyzed in light of the reference to the demographic variables. To examine the differences in the general image of the kindergarten teachers between parents, students, and kindergarten teachers, repeated measures ANOVA, t-tests, and subsequent Scheffe tests are performed. In addition, the differences in the perception of the image of the kindergarten teacher according to sociodemographic variables are examined through t-test for independent samples, and the relationship between the participants' demographic variables and the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image is examined through the Spearman test.

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In the chapter of the discussion, each one of the fifteen research hypotheses is analyzed in light of the statistical findings and the review of the literature. The conclusions are presented in the concluding chapter of the work.

In light of the aforementioned statements, this work attempts to understand the image of the profession of the kindergarten teacher in society in Israel and to delineate the profile of the kindergarten teacher, as it is perceived in the eyes of society and thus to create awareness and to create change.

I. Review of the Literature

1. Education for Early Childhood

This chapter is the gateway to the research work. Its aim is to provide the background of the special profession of the preschool[1] teacher. The chapter will explain what early childhood education is and how it is unique and will present data on what is done around the world in this field. The chapter will present an explanation and background from the research literature on the many roles involved in the profession of the preschool teacher. I will note research studies and data from research reports conducted around the world, will focus on the state of early childhood education in Israel, and will describe the standards for early childhood education obligatory today in Israel. In addition, in this chapter I will clarify the concept of the image and how image is created in society, as well as the professional identity and professional image.

1.1 What Is Education for Early Childhood?

Education in early childhood addresses the ages of birth to six years (in certain countries birth to eight years) and constitutes the infrastructure of the education of children. The topic of early childhood education in the OECD[2] countries is called Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). Education in early childhood primarily addresses the giving of an equal opportunity to every child and obligates the cultivation of every child's innate ability and the development of the child's ability to adjust to the society where he will choose to live, with cultivation and building of a cultural mindset and alongside cultivation, inculcation, and improvement of skills that enable realization of the personal potential. It is also the creation of a rich base of concepts, developed intellectual attitudes (curiosity, perseverance, concentration, and desire to cope with challenges), and positive attitudes towards learning and the cultivation of young people who are interested

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[1] In Israel the preschool is usually a framework for children aged three to five, when elementary school begins at the age of six (first grade). A preschool may have only one age group, for example children in their first year of education, aged three, or children in their second year of education, aged four, in the pre-kindergarten, or children in their third year of education, aged five, in the kindergarten, or several age groups. Thus, in this paper when the word preschool is used it refers to an educational framework for children in this age spectrum.

[2] OECD is Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

in and willing to invest in the development of themselves and their environment (European Commission, 2014).

In a research report authored by the National Academy of the Sciences in Israel on the topic of early childhood education (Klein & Yavlon, 2008), the learning in early childhood is defined as based on the relationship with the attachment figure, learning through a relationship with adults whose role it is to mediate the environment and to create the world of mental representations and to create a pleasant social environment in which there are children from the same age group or close age groups. In addition, the mediating adult is responsible for the creation of a learning environment (physical environment, ways of teaching, teaching aids, agenda, curriculum) adjusted to development and for the adjustment of the educational activity to the children's true needs.

The curriculum in the preschool is integrative and is aimed at the development of skills and the construction of interdisciplinary knowledge. All this can exist only with the integration of the care (nutrition, cleanliness, physical comfort, dress, personal responsibility), which is an inseparable part of the intellectual, social-emotional, and value-based education.

Moreover, in early childhood there is a difficulty in the differentiation between the development of the ability (the child's development and the thinking development – process that reaches maturation around the age of eight) for the cultivation of academic achievements (which are a direct output of the educational process). At this age, emphasis is placed on the cultivation of thinking skills (comparison, classification, arrangement, and drawing conclusions) and life skills (literacy, language, treatment in information, sociability, self-acceptance, and assertiveness) as a main element in teaching. This obligates the development of an integrative and interdisciplinary, flexible and modular curriculum adjusted to learners and processes of documentation and evaluation adjusted to the children's developmental stage (Klein & Yavlon, 2008). In addition, there is agreement among the researchers that knowledge on written and spoken language develops among children in early education (Adams, 1990; Byrnes & Wasik,

2009; Ferreiro, 1990; Scarborough, 2001; Teale & Sulzby, 1998). The development of these children depends on their degree of exposure to experiences with written and spoken language and the quality of the mediation they receive at this age (NELP, 2008).

In addition, in this period, which is called "early childhood", there is considerable meaning to the development of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills, which receive an equal value. It is important to express the child's areas of interest, needs, and stages of development and to address the child's comprehensive environment and to shape it meticulously so that it will contribute to the cultivation of all areas of development, both personal learning and social learning (Sela, 2004).

1.2 Education for Early Childhood in Israel

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (2015), the percentage of children in Israel aged zero to five is the highest of all Europe and the anticipated increase in the number of children in Israel is the highest. It is further possible to learn that in Israel as in most of the countries of Europe, the Free Education Law is at the age of three, and the Compulsory Education Law is from age six. The result is that there is a high percentage of children aged three in the preschool. Another datum is that the national expenditure per child in Israel in preschool education is low in terms of dollars relative to the OECD mean. Most of the children of Israel aged three and above are educated in public education. On the average, in the OECD countries there is one preschool teacher for every 5.14 children while in Israel it is 2.69 for one preschool teacher. When the teaching assistants are included, the mean in Israel for each staff member is 8.12 children and in that it is close to the OECD average (OECD, 2014).

With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the responsibility for preschool education was placed in the hands of the Department of Elementary Education in the Ministry of Education according to the Compulsory Education Law 1949. In the year 1959, this authority was extended to include children aged three and four, when the Department of Elementary Education was in charge also of the preschools. At the end of the 1980s the head of the Ministry of Education, Shimshon Shoshani, established the Department for Preschool Education as one of the three age departments in the Ministry,

the Department of Preschool Education, the Department of Elementary Education, and the Department of Secondary Education (Michaelovitz, 1999).

There are four types of preschools in Israel. Preschools that belong to the recognized and official education teach the curriculum determined by the Ministry of Education, do not classify the children, and do not charge payments from the parents beyond what is permitted (basic fee). These preschools are budgeted completely by the Ministry of Education. Recognized but not official preschools are private preschools that became corporations and received an operating license from the Ministry of Education. These preschools are subsidized in part by the Ministry of Education and the rest by the parents. Private preschools in which there are at least ten children aged three and above must receive the supervision of the Ministry of Education., while private preschools in which there are fewer than ten children aged three and above do not require the supervision of the Ministry of Education (Moshel, 2015).

The Ministry of Education authors curricula for the preschools under its responsibility in diverse topics and obligates the preschools to use them in the frameworks. The perception of the Department of Preschool Education is that the infrastructure for the nature of the preschool is the child and the educational process. The educational process in the education system is lengthy and focuses on the development of the unique personality of each child from the moment the child enters into the preschool framework: it provides an answer to the child's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs, enables the fulfillment of his abilities, develops the innate creativity, and broadens his areas of interest. The realization of the educational goals in the preschool requires broad and in-depth professional knowledge, insight, sensitivity, and determined belief in each individual's ability to be a part in the social fabric and the proposed diverse activities. The goals of early childhood education and the ways to realize them are based on the systemic-developmental approach that addresses all areas of development and the multidirectional reciprocal relationships between the child's personality components and the components of the environment (Department of Preschool Education, Ministry of Education).

1.3 Importance of Education for Early Childhood

The importance of early childhood education is steadily increasing. In recent years, we see the research studies in different fields, such as brain sciences, developmental psychology, and economics, which have direct influence on the ways in which the policy-makers build budgets and organize services for young children and their families. The research studies are divided broadly into two prominent groups. In one group, there are research studies that focused on the development of the single child and his achievements, and in the other group there are research studies that address the social-economic interests of education in early childhood for society at large. The common denominator of these research studies is the perception that the investment in children from their moment of birth onwards is important for the purpose of the achievements in the future of the children themselves and of society at large (Rosenthal, 2004). The research studies that address the child's development are based on the study of the brain, a field that has steadily developed in recent years and can explain many phenomena and difficulties that develop at later ages and can shed light on many aspects of human development in general. The early childhood period has the greatest influence, since this is the age, the stage, at which the brain develops most rapidly. One of the famous research studies is the research of Professor Oberklaid (2010), a research known by the name of Perry. This is a longitudinal research that commenced four decades ago. It was conducted in Michigan. In it 123 children from Afro-American families participated. The researchers followed up after the children, and the findings indicate that the investment in early childhood has the greatest impact, since this is the age/stage at which the brain develops the most rapidly.

The research on the topic of early childhood in the past decade addresses four main areas:

1. Research studies in the field of brain studies proved the importance of the environment in which the child grew up, which influences the anatomy and physiology of the brain and supports the development of neural circuits.
2. Research studies in the field of the life circles proved that influence of the experiences the child undergoes during early childhood.

3. Research studies in the field of processes of intervention proved that high quality programs during early childhood influence the poor environmental conditions.

4. Research studies in the field of economy proved that investment in early childhood pays in the long term and in the short term.

Researchers in the United States and at their head the Nobel prize winner James Heckman (Heckman et al., 2010) based on these research studies (Oberklaid, 2010) and calculated that the return on investment of one dollar during early childhood is about 60.8 dollars throughout the children's life. An investment in high quality programs for early childhood yields a cumulative return throughout the entire life and therefore yields return over the longest period of time for the benefit of the individual and society.

A document prepared by the World Bank (Young, 1996) presents an explanation and justification of the investment in early childhood and describes the importance of the meaningful intervention in preschool to the future of the individual and society as investment that is worthwhile for the country. Therefore, today there is overwhelming agreement about the importance of the early childhood period in the early intervention and tailored care and the early childhood period is perceived as critical in the person's life (Oberklaid, Baird, Blair, Melhuish, & Hall, 2013).

Intervention and care at the age of the preschool contribute to the reduction of gaps, facilitates the improvement of the results in the national tests and the prevention of dropping out from the school, reduces the number of children cared for in special education, facilitates the development of life skills and skills required for the children's adjustment in the different circles of life, and contributes to their transformation into independent adults who belong to society.

1.4 Status of Education for Early Childhood in Israel

Education in early childhood is influenced by what happens in the world and in the OECD countries. In the past twenty years, it is found at a high priority in the policy of the government in Israel and this following the published international research studies

whose influence has penetrated also into the State of Israel. National research committees are appointed, research reports are published, and reforms are implemented.

Contemporary reports were written that compare Israel to the United States and to the countries of the OECD. Following the development of the research and the insights, the Department of Preschool Education, which is the organizational system that includes the education institutions for children aged three to six in the State of Israel, conducted a number of reforms in recent years in preschool education.

New Horizon Reform[3]. Change in the perception of time dedicated to education and intelligent use of the hours of activity in the preschool, extension of the school day, organization of the structure of teaching and learning and the agenda in the preschool, increased closeness of the relationship and educational partnership with the parents, and change in the scope of the position of the preschool teacher.

Free Education for Ages 3-4. As a result, every year about 300,000 children are added to the public education system and the knowledge field of professional staff members who are expert in this development stage.

The Second Teaching Assistant and the Leading Preschool Teacher Reform. An organizational system of leading preschool teachers for geographic clusters of fifteen preschools was established, a second teaching assistant for children ages three-four was added, and additional budget for enrichment was given in the preschools.

In addition, in July 2017 the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) passed a law to establish the Council for Early Childhood Education. The Council was established in February 2018, and it operates in the framework of the Ministry of Education. The Minister of Education is the chair of the council, and the council is responsible for the coordination of the field of early childhood education in all aspects, educational, medical, treatment,

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[3] The New Horizon Reform is a systemic reform in the preschools, elementary schools, and middle schools that is being gradually implemented according to an agreement signed between the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Union in March 2008. According to the Ministry of Education, the main objectives of this reform are to strengthen the status of the teachers and to increase their salary; to provide equality of opportunities for every student; to advance the students' achievements; to improve the school climate, and to empower and extend the authorities of the school principal.

and social, in all that pertains to children from birth until the beginning of the studies in the first grade. The roles of the council are to prepare a multi-year national plan with the aim of promoting the care in early childhood, to coordinate between the government offices in the field of early childhood, to establish and manage a center for information and research in the field of early childhood. The council began its work, and its very establishment indicates the recognition of the importance of the topic and the future changes (Knesset of Israel, 2017).

These reforms present a significant change in the perception of early childhood education (Ministry of Education, Preschool Education Website, 2019). These changes influence the preschool teacher's role as the manager of the preschool, shape it, and re-define it and influence the many diverse abilities required of the preschool teacher and define the figure of the preschool teacher in Israel.

2. The Profile of the Preschool Teacher in Israel

This chapter will address the figure of the preschool teacher in terms of the abilities, skills, knowledge, and values required of the preschool teacher who works with young children and the wide range of the preschool teacher's roles – as an educator, as a teacher, as a counselor, as a manager, and as a leader who leads and establishes the nature of the preschool and as a caregiver.

2.1 Defintion of the Preschool Teacher's Role by the Ministry of Education in Israel

The preschool teachers in the preschools have a main and significant role with influence on the processes of the best development of each one of the preschool children (Department of Preschool Education, Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 8). The Department of Preschool Education in the Ministry of Education defined the obligations of the preschool teachers as follows:

1. In-depth recognition of each one of the children through observations and follow-up after every child's learning products, documentation in his personal file, and

responsibility for the promotion of every child through the methodical observation and follow-up throughout the entire year.

2. Creation of high quality individualized interaction with every child: the development of empathy and sensitivity towards his needs, differential reference, and an emotional response, feedback on his functioning and his behavior.

3. Identification of unique difficulties and needs and construction of an adjusted work program. Making decisions regarding the referral to professional factors with the involvement of the child's parents.

4. Construction of a best preschool climate according to the principles and standards and consultation with support factors (psychologist/counselor in life situations that create distresses).

5. Intelligent and planned choice of the learning contents and teaching means and connection to the core programs. The work will be expressed in a variety of ways: individually with the child, in a small group, and in the plenum.

6. Organization of the educational environment according to the work plan and creation of a daily routine and work patterns that enable the children and the preschool staff to safely act during the play and the learning.

7. Involvement of the parents and preservation of a continuous relationship with them throughout the entire year of studies.

8. Response to factors in the community and in the town where the preschool is found and their involvement in the educational process and relevant factors in the local government.

9. Creation of an educational continuum between the preschool and the school and the existence of a relationship with the education system to which the children will go for the first grade.

These nine sections summarize in short, the multiplicity of the preschool teacher's diverse and challenging roles and indicate the many aspects in the role, which are discussed in the next section.

2.2 Aspects in the Preschool Teacher's Role

2.2.1 Instructional Aspect in the Preschool Teacher's Role

In the educational literature there is a philosophical discussion as well as many years of argument regarding the definition of the teaching as a profession (Apple, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2001). Hativa (2003) emphasizes that there is progress on the matter and proposes that to make teaching into a profession and to increase the prestige, so that it will be similar to that of medicine and law, it is necessary to establish every stage in the progress through tests. As a part of the definition of the profession, there is increased reference to the question of what are the components of professionalism that make a teacher into an expert teacher. According to Tobin (2010), the expert teacher is an expert in his student's learning processes in the field of knowledge he teaches. Darling-Hammond (1999) presents five characteristics of expert teachers presented as standards for quality of teaching presented in the United States by the National Board for Professional Standards of Teaching.

1. Commitment to the students and to their learning process.
2. Mastery of a field of knowledge and the way in which it is necessary to inculcate it in the students
3. Responsibility for effective and structured instruction of the learning, including the organization of the environment, tailored evaluation methods, and involvement of the parents.
4. Thinking about the process of teaching in a methodical manner, reflectiveness based on developing theories and acquired experience.
5. Belonging to a professional community: teamwork, fellowship, and creation of community projects.

Maskit (2012) addresses three dimensions in the teacher's profession: academic, professional, and value-oriented. Regarding the definition of the academic component, there are many references as well as many definitions revolving around the knowledge necessary for teachers (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Shulman, 1987; Wilson & Youngs, 2005). This is knowledge of the curricula, disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical

knowledge, knowledge on the learners and their characteristics. In addition, there is reference to expertise and knowledge in the specific field the teacher teaches; without adequate expertise the teacher cannot process the contents of the subject or the topic into accessible, absorbable, and interesting forms of knowledge for her different students.

In the definition of the profession, the researchers (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Shulman, 1987; Wilson & Youngs, 2005) address the question of the nature of the disciplinary knowledge that the teacher is supposed to have at her command. In their opinion, a high level of mastery of the developing content knowledge of the knowledge field that the teacher teaches is necessary, with emphasis on the teacher's professional competence. Tamir (1998) defines the knowledge as expertise in the learning material, different ways of communication in the interaction between those and the learning environment. Other researchers address global knowledge (Holden & Hicks, 2007) and knowledge in the context of multiculturalism (Gorski, 2009).

Regarding the preschool teacher, the picture is even more complex. According to MATANA (2019), one of the obligatory objectives of the preschool teacher is the advancement of the children to mastery in all areas of knowledge in the curricula, and this necessitates the preschool teacher's mastery and skill in a variety of areas of knowledge or least in the basis of the areas of knowledge she is supposed to teach, to the point of the ability to build an interdisciplinary integrative program that combines a range of knowledge fields and is based on in-depth disciplinary knowledge. This can be accomplished only on the basis of professional knowledge in the writing of curricula and assessment (Beane, 1995).

In all content in which the preschool teacher engages in the preschool, she must promote knowledge, skills, and values. Knowledge is defined as concepts and fact, rules, processes, characteristics, and methods, abstract principles and theories (Ministry of Education, 2019). In addition, the complexity of the preschool teacher's teaching work is expressed in knowledge required for the accommodation of ways and methods of teaching to the young age of the children. Moreover, she must tailor specifically the content and ways of teaching to the age group that she teaches, age three, age four, and

age five or six. The content in the preschool is a constellation of topics, concepts, values, and skills that the children need to learn in the preschool, and this includes contents with the goal of enjoyment and pleasure. Therefore, the preschool teacher must have considerable knowledge on the topic of how children learn in early childhood (Brandt, 2000; Department of Preschool Education, Ministry of Education, 2010).

For the learning in early childhood to be powerful, the preschool teacher must choose and adjust the learning materials, the contents, the ways of teaching, and the shaping of the learning environment. These three are significant components in the work of teaching in early childhood. Regarding the contents, the learning materials, the curriculum for the preschool, they as aforementioned address the range of the core areas. The core areas were written by the expert professionals from the discipline with the integration of experts from early childhood. The programs include rationale, fundamental assumptions, age-appropriate topics, objectives, goals, examples of activities and ways of evaluation. From this, the preschool teacher builds an integrative pedagogical curriculum for her preschool, for the long term, the intermediate term, and the short term (from a year to a day) (Department of Preschool Education, Ministry of Education, 2010). The autonomy in the building of the program is considerable, and the preschool teacher is the one who chooses the contents. The contents are supposed to have meaning for the learners, to be challenging, and to suit the level of development according to the children of the specific preschool where the preschool teacher works (Vidislavsk, Zairi, et al., 2013). The preschool teacher must incorporate ways of teaching and create learning experiences. The learning needs to be based on previous knowledge, with room for choice and control for the learner, feedback for the learners, use of different strategies, integration of play, giving a considerable place for repeat experiences, and learning in different learning frameworks – all together, in groups, and in individualized learning. The third and important component is the learning environment that addresses emotional, social, and value-oriented aspects and the entirety of the activity in the preschool (Brandt, 2000). This is an environment that promotes a positive emotional climate, which is supportive and enables quality interactions among all those who come to the preschool, a physical environment that involves the children in its construction, enables learning through play and activity, organization of the educational environment in the preschool

and its shaping are a part of the planning of the work program of the preschool teacher and the preschool staff (Brooks, 2014).

Recently emphasis is placed on the partnership of the children in the construction of the environment and the learning processes that involve the children and in the choice of the contents. This approach is called in Israel "the future preschool". In recent years the awareness of meaningful learning and of the importance of the children's participation in the process of their learning has increased. Many educational frameworks emphasize active and experiential learning, which is learning based on the belief in the ability of the children and the preschool staff to initiate, to learn, to research, and to create their preschool through optimal and constant interaction among all the partners. This is from the understanding that when such a process will occur, there will be a learning experience suited to the reality of today and the challenges of the future (Ministry of Education, 2019). Emphasis is placed on the development of the functioning of self-orientation in learning (Zimmerman, 2011), which is a process in which active partners learn in the learning process. The learners become the owners of the learning. The teacher's role changes from learning focused on the teacher to learning aimed at the learner (Gibbons, 2003). The trends in the Ministry of Education in Israel change and become updated on the topic according to international research. The place of the learners in the learning process changes and more research studies indicate the advantages of the approach that promotes the functioning of self-direction in learning as one of the main functions in the 21st century (Meyer, Haywood, Sachev, & Faraday, 2008). These research studies indicate that this approach contributes to higher motivation, better achievements, improvement in the educational climate, improvement in the learner's self-confidence and sense of self-efficacy, reduction of gaps, etc.

The Ministry of Education in Israel emphasizes the professionalization of the preschool teachers in many areas, so that the preschool teacher will know and master the different core areas, such as literacy and language; mathematics; science, nature, and technology; art; and life skills, and will know innovative pedagogical approaches, the future preschool, and will incorporate digital media in the preschool (Ministry of Education, Preschool Education, 2019).

2.2.2 Managerial Aspect in the Preschool Teacher's Work

In addition to the educational activity and teaching work, the preschool is a small organizational framework, and therefore the preschool teacher, the preschool managers, also engage in the management of the institution and manage the educational staff, such as the teaching assistant, the supplementary preschool teacher and the supplementary teaching assistant, the inclusion preschool teacher, and teaching assistants for new immigrants, children with difficulties, and children with allergies. The preschool teacher also coordinates the actions of the assistive factors, such as professional instructors who work with the children, psychological educational service, social workers. With the transition to the special education reform and the amendment of the law in July 2018 (Knesset, 2019), this staff will increase in number and the management role of the preschool teacher will broaden.

Every preschool teacher who is a manager of the preschool is responsible for translating the educational policy and for organizing the educational environment according to the policy of the Ministry of Education, the Department of Preschool Education according to the policy of the district, the supervisor in the region, the children in the preschool group, and the preschool teacher's educational credo and to determine a yearly administrative program suited to children who are the unique audience of 'clients' at the given time. For this purpose, it must recognize the policy of the Ministry of Education and the relevant documents, such as the MATANA document (MATANA is an acronym in Hebrew meaning kit for planning, management, and preparation (MATANA, 2019). The kit is a tool with four main goals: a management tool, an assistance tool, a mediation tool, and a reflection tool. In its management goal, the kit connects the preschool teacher as the manager of the preschool to the goals, objectives, and outcome measures that reflect the effectiveness of the actions performed in the educational institution where she works. In its assistive goal, it is an aid for the preschool teacher in the preschools to build an annual work plan that reflects the values, perceptions, institutional culture, and orders of priorities of the educational activity. In the mediation goal, the kit is a main mediator between the strategic program of the office headquarters and the preschool work program derived from it. In its fourth goal, the kit

reflects the pedagogical resources at the disposal of the preschool teacher and concentrates them in one accessible place (MATANA, 2019).

Five roles that the manager performs are expressed also in the role of the preschool teacher (Biger, 2003): planning, organization, operation, coordination, and budgeting.

Planning. The preschool teacher plans an annual program for the long term and a plan for the intermediate and short term, a pedagogical program and an administrative plan. The two plans contribute to the achievement of the educational objectives posed at the start of the school year.

Organization. The preschool teacher is responsible for the organization of the preschool and the division of roles in the administrative and pedagogical fields. She determines the contents she will address and the contents that the supplementary preschool teacher will focus on, and if in the preschool there are two assistants, then the role of the preschool teacher / manager is to divide the load between them and to determine the roles of the morning assistant and the afternoon assistant.

Operation. As the manager of the preschool, the preschool teacher deploys the staff working with her and divides the roles. At the start of the year, she coordinates expectations with the staff regarding the work arrangements and ways of communication. During the year, she must hold additional meetings, update the staff in changes, report innovations, discuss differences of opinion, and attempt to reach agreements and appropriate communication between members of the staff. The management of the preschool includes also the delegation of authorities. The preschool delegates her authority to the supplementary preschool teacher, who bears the management responsibility on the days the preschool teacher is absent (Stodney, 2009).

As the manager of the preschool, the preschool teacher maintains an ongoing and constant relationship with the responsible factors in the local governments, for the administrative handling of the preschool and for the involvement of the preschool in the town and community education system and for involvement in the events and activities of

the town. The preschool teacher's management role in the operation of the preschool includes the responsibility for the physical maintenance of the preschool, for the sounding of the alert about deficiencies and safety and security defects, and for the report to the supervisor and the local government.

Coordination. The preschool teacher as the preschool manager is committed to the coordination of the entrance of different professional factors into the preschool: social workers, educational psychological service workers, instructors, etc. The coordination includes also reference to events in the community in which the preschool children participate and events that the preschool teacher initiates.

Budgeting. Although the management of the budget is defined as one of the roles of the manager, the operation of the budget of the preschool is not the sole responsibility of the preschool teacher. She receives a limited budget for the purchase of consumable materials, parties, and shows she runs (Biger, 2003). Other researchers (Frish, 2012; Mevorach, 2017; Rahm, 1997) emphasize the management facet in the preschool teacher's work. In their opinion, the preschool is described as a small organization managed by the preschool teacher. The reference to the complexity of the management role is emphasized. While the preschool is a small organization, it has a unique character that enables independent management. However, some note that this is a role for which the preschool teacher was not trained. She has a system of support: counselor, instructor, supervisor, and psychologist, but the ability to navigate among them depends on her management abilities.

2.2.3 Organizational Aspect in the Preschool Teacher's Work

The preschool is perceived as an organization. "In every organization there is a formal institutionalized pattern of authority and an official body of rules and procedures that direct at the assistance of the organization's goals" (Harling, 1989). "The structure of the organization includes all the role-holders and the reciprocal relationships in the organization". The goal of the organizational structure is to support the work processes and the coordination of the workers' actions, from the shared desire to achieve organizational goals (Bar Haim, 2002).

Gaziel (1987) addresses two basic characteristics in the existence of an organization: mutual dependence and reciprocal relationships with the environment and other systems. He addresses the public administration as an open system, which creates reciprocal relationships with the environment, receives feedback, and responds to the feedback from the environment. According to Gaziel (1987), the preschool is a public social organization that creates many relationships with the environment: the community, the parents, the education system, the local government, and so on. As the preschool teacher is more aware of this situation and manages the organization correctly, its success will be more significant (Eisenberg & Oplatka, 2013). They further add that the preschool teacher takes the place of many professionals who exist in the school, such as the secretary, the maintenance man, the principal, and the teacher. The preschool teacher is the formal authority who represents the preschool, is in charge of the management of the resources, the management and arrangement of the work, and the transmission of information to the staff. She determines the dates of the staff meetings and runs them, and she determines meetings for consultations with the psychological service, the welfare services, and additional factors as necessary. She holds parents' meetings and along with the parents' committee she decides upon the enrichment lessons and the employment of a teacher for rhythm-music, she sets the administrative organizational program for the preschool, and she is responsible to fulfill the Circulars of the Director General of the Ministry of Education, including the safety procedures and health procedures in the preschool (Ministry of Education, Preschool Education Website, 2019).

Frish (2012) emphasizes that, although the preschool is a small organization that the preschool teacher must manage and lead, the perception of society and of the preschool teacher herself as a manager still does not exist. He addresses the load of tasks that are a part of the preschool teacher's role as the manager of the organization. She must undertake considerable administrative work: she must fill out attendance reports, financial reports, and safety reports, she must engage in the acquisition of equipment, and so on. She must perform secretarial roles, counsel the parents, manage the staff of assistants, and accomplish other roles that in the school are distributed among an entire staff of workers but in the preschool are performed solely by the preschool teacher.

2.2.4 Value-Oriented Aspect in the Preschool Teacher's Work – The Preschool Teacher as an Educational Leader

Oplatka (2009) asks the following question. What is educational leadership? He answers that for many decades comprehensive research has been performed on the question of leadership in different organizations. Leadership is an abstract concept that is difficult to define. He maintains that it is not surprising that the number of definitions of leadership is equal to the number of people providing definitions. Most of the definitions of leadership tend to see in it a process of influence directed at the individual or the group.

According to the Saphir dictionary (Avneon, 1997), a leader is one who walks at the head, who determines that it is necessary to act in a certain way. Another definition of leadership is the ability to assemble others around shared goals or those whom the leader has succeeded in transforming into his partners and to lead them to the achievement of these goals. Leaders lead through their source of influence. Already in the initial research studies on the topic (French & Raven, 1959), the researchers presented the factors that motivate the leader and create the leader's power of influence. In their opinion, this can be legitimate power, which is granted by law and authority, the power of charisma, which is the personal magic and ability to give the other person a sense of closeness, the power of rewards, which is the ability to provide reward or punishment to the followers, or professional power, which is power that derives from professionalism, knowledge, and experience in a field.

Goron (2009) extends the legitimate power to the social image. In essence, she transfers the responsibility for the transformation of the teacher into a leader for society, and especially for the establishment. She lists three conditions that can make the educator into a leader. The first condition is change of the teacher's image and change of the expectations from the teacher. She holds that leadership must obtain social recognition. Outside of the walls of the educational institution, it is necessary to maintain its continuity. For this purpose, it is necessary to improve the teachers' work conditions, primarily a respectable salary and a reasonable work environment. It is necessary to

expect from the educator creativity, innovation, and courage to create and lead changes. The second condition, in her opinion, is the appropriate training of teachers. In the framework of the training processes it is necessary to create empowerment as creators of change, or in other words, to give the education students the possibility of experiencing themselves as such. It is necessary to encourage them to adopt positions in the topics of education and society, to learn from the experience of teachers-leaders, to create an educational vision, and to invest means for realization. She summarizes that teachers who have experienced such a training process are empowered teachers and will better utilize their limited educational space to implement meaningful education. The third condition she presents is the development of leadership and is related to the perception of the teachers as professional educators who are the first partners in the research, development, and implementation of the decisions pertaining to education and teaching. The teachers are the ones who translate the big ideas into the language of reality. In her opinion, it is necessary to grant teachers the status of experts in their field. Expertise means the implementation of professional judgment and the participation in the making of decisions. In her opinion, it is necessary to develop mechanisms and spaces of the broad participation of teachers in the making of decisions relating to teaching and education, as well as to their professional status. Thus, as many teachers as possible will participate in the processes of definition, implementation, and examination of the educational policy inside and outside of the schools. The involvement of the teachers requires thinking of another type (Goron, 2009).

Additional researchers have examined the issue of leadership in education. Harpaz (2009) in his article on spiritual leadership presents the idea he formulated with Professor Tadmor (2009) and describes the main characteristics of educational leadership. The first characteristic is pedagogical understanding: the education leader, in his opinion, needs to have intuitive and theoretical orientation in pedagogy. She needs to understand pedagogy, live pedagogy, and have the understanding of and desire for pedagogy. The second characteristic of education leadership is the leading of people to the construction of a shared educational vision, and the third characteristic is to like people. He focuses on the important characteristic that in his opinion is most absent –

spirituality. The educational leader implements conditions for the search for and creation of spiritual meaning.

The main characteristic of the educational leader is conscious and reasoned educational identity, or in other words, the educational leader must have an educational outlook pertaining to dilemmas and essential value-oriented educational themes, as in example of identical rights (the child and his good versus the needs of society, the parent's rights versus the educators' rights. According to Harpaz (2009), such an identity enables the definition of the goal of education and the adjustment of means to it. The educational leader can thus make a choice that derives from pedagogical sentiment and a moral tendency and thus can arrive at a certain educational idea. The educational leader has influence and the ability to lead. The desired educational leader indicates the direction and leads towards it.

Michaelovitz (2012) calls the educational identity a clear outlook, a value-based identity, formed in the field that the leader seeks to lead. She further maintains that there must be from the leader's perspective loyalty to the system of values at the basis of the goals she seeks to inculcate, or in other words, a clear value-oriented identity, loyalty, and trustworthiness are an essential and primary condition for leadership, followed by involvement and acknowledgment of the need to act and to take initiative. She lists a number of concepts related to leadership, such as locus of control, initiative, involvement, power, influence, value-oriented identity, professional autonomy, and loyalty and trustworthiness. The preschool teacher is the main source of influence in the preschool. She is perceived as the leader, the primary determinant of the reciprocal relationships and the atmosphere.

Thus, when we go to examine the roles of the preschool teacher and her activity it appears that alongside the preschool teacher's role as the manager she also functions as an educational leader, leadership that is expressed in her ability to lead her preschool, including the children and staff members who work alongside her, so as to attain the goals in which she believes. In the moral management of the learning class it is possible to see her performance of a complex moral-social program, when the ability to form such

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a program obligates a proactive perception, a systemic perception, and a perception of managerial leadership (Tal, 2010). In the preschool teacher's style of leadership she leads and determines a communicational behavioral pattern for the child's wellbeing and good. In essence, the class climate depends on the preschool teacher (Michaelovitz, 2012). The class climate is a comprehensive and multidimensional concept that includes many variables that are influenced by diverse environmental factors. It derives from the constellation of the group processes that occur in the reciprocal relationships between the teacher and the children and among the students themselves and in the educational-learning organization – the school or the preschool (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1988). Relationships based on respect of the child, sensitivity towards the child, and response to the child and relationships of cooperation are main professional components in the preschool teacher's work (Dalli, 2008).

The Department of Preschool Education in the Ministry of Education perceives the preschool teacher as an educational leader with influence and a significant role in the implementation of value-based changes in society in Israel (Ministry of Education, Preschool Education Website, 2019). In the past, behavioral changes were introduced into society through the preschool teachers in the preschools, like education to preserve wildflowers and the prohibition to pick them and the awareness of the importance of fastening the seatbelt to children safety. Today as well there are value-oriented topics that the preschool teacher is expected to advance in the preschool, and they are part of the objectives in MATANA (2018), such as, for example, the topic of sustainability that resonates in the public at large in Israel and around the world. The prevalent assumption is that meaningful change begins in the preschool, and the preschool teachers are required to encourage a responsible culture of consumption that leads the values of sustainability. The preschool staff constitutes an example to be imitation for children and the preschool community and acts for it and for the coming generations. In the curriculum for sustainability in the preschools, Anders (2010) emphasizes that the values of culture, heritage, and the environment that we acquire as children are those that shape us, our character, our consciousness and shape later on, as adults, the world in which we live. Hence, the preschool teacher has a role in the leading of change and its implementation for a meaningful society. The same holds true for the topic of health that has reached the

agenda in Israel in recent years. In the guide for assimilation of the topic of health in the preschool (Livneh et al., 2011) it is emphasized that "the assimilation of broad and comprehensive programs in the preschools will facilitate the cultivation and shaping of health behaviors among children and their family members and will contribute to the promotion of a healthy life style" (Livneh et al., 2011, p. 8). There too the preschool is perceived as a period critical to the shaping of values and the responsibility assigned to the preschool teacher is considerable. The same holds true with citizenship in early childhood, democracy, and other value-oriented areas that the preschool teacher is required to inculcate as the lifestyle in the preschool.

Rodd (2013) addresses the preschool teacher's abilities in management: she is required to function as a manager and an educational leader already during her induction period. In her opinion, the novice preschool teacher does not have time for the developing process and thus a difference is created between experienced preschool teachers and novice preschool teachers and preschool teachers with little experience. Therefore, Mevorach (2017) proposes to develop master degree programs that will broaden and deepen the knowledge and primarily will enable the student- preschool teacher to develop in the fields of organization and management, alongside personal development in the direction of educational leadership in the educational institution. This is based on her professional status and will develop professionally in the organization that she works in (Mevorach, 2017).

2.2.5 Counseling Aspect / Relationship with Parents – One of the Complex Roles of the Preschool Teacher

In addition to the roles described in the previous sections, the preschool teacher has another significant role, and it is the relationship with the parents. The work with parents is the most complicated and difficult component in the preschool teacher's role (Shimoni & Baxter, 1996). Some of the role is the preservation of the relationship with the parents, the dedication of information between parents and preschool teachers, and another part is the issue of the parent involvement. Here the variety of ways of participation of the parents in what happens in the preschool is included (Clarke,

Sheridan, & Woods, 2010). The parents' involvement is a concept that expresses a broad range of actions, regarding the form of organization in the school. Elizur (1996) defines the relationship with the parents through three concepts: involvement, collaboration (work in cooperation towards shared goals), and empowerment.

The involvement occurs when the parents are recruited for the good of the school, and the school promotes their involvement willingly. This is active involvement in the educational process that obligates a considerable degree of interest and skill on the parents' part. The balance between the parents' needs and the school's needs increases the chance of harmony between them. "Intervention", in contrast, is perceived when the parents constitute a political, conflictual pressure group that encounters in the suspicious reference and in the forced cooperation with them. The primary theoretical basis for this relationship between the educational institution and the home is the ecological developmental approach of Bronfenbrenner (1986). According to this approach, the environment in which the child is raised has acute influence on his development. It is necessary to address the institution of the family and the educational institution as intertwined systems and as influencing one another. As the systems in which the child is found in contact act in coordination with one another, the child's development will benefit. In situations of conflict and lack of coordination between the systems, negative results are caused in terms of the child's development. Conversely, in a situation in which every system acts well but not in coordination the child's development is harmed. Research studies that examine the contribution of the parents' involvement to the children's development (Olsen & Fuller, 2008; Wilder, 2013) prove an improvement in achievements, a rise in motivation and curiosity to learn, improvement in the self-confidence, positive attitudes towards the education institutions and towards the teachers. The parents also derive many benefits from their involvement in the educational framework, such as openness and acceptance of the other, increased awareness of the children's emotional, social, and cognitive needs, and the parents learn about the child's development and the developmental difficulties and the coping with them. In addition, they are enriched in the different areas of knowledge learned (Powell & Smith-Doerr, 1996).

The involvement of the parents in the educational processes in the preschool may contribute greatly to the relationship with them. Reynolds and Shlafer (2010) note the participation of the parents in the school actions in tasks related to the child's learning and the contribution of the parent's relationship with the educational institution on the issue of the child's progress. They emphasize the parents' involvement in the community actions that contribute to the children's education. The relationship between the preschool teacher and the children's parents is an asymmetrical professional relationship, different from an equal friendly relationship. The preschool teacher's role dictates the rules of behavior with the parents. The preschool teacher is committed to the behavior dictated by the organization to which the preschool belongs on matters such as payments, hours of activity, policy regarding bringing sick children to the preschool, and so on. Her role is to bring to the parents' knowledge the obligatory rules and to see that they act according to them (Frish, 2012).

Because of the importance of the topic, the many difficulties that arise on the work with the parents, and the considerable engagement of the many professional factors related to the preschool on the issue of the parents' involvement and intervention in the preschool, a select committee of experts was established in the year 2008 by the Ministry of Education and National Academy of the Sciences. Its members were researchers from different fields of knowledge. The committee sought to research the family relationships in the framework of early childhood education and their contribution to the child's development and success. In the year 2011 it published a meaningful report (Greenbaum & Freed, 2011), which defines the relationship of the educational framework among children from preschool to the third grade with the family, reviews different models of the parents' involvement, defines the policy and situation in Israel and around the world, and presents conclusions. The main conclusions are that the relationship of the educational framework with the family influences in three main areas: learning achievements, emotional and social adjustment, and future influence on the parents' involvement in the continuation of their child's life in the different frameworks.

The report also presents recommendations on the topic, which were phrased as strategies for action:

1. To establish a unit on the topic of the family relationships and education frameworks. The committee recommended establishing as a part of the organizational structure of the Ministry of Education a unit for the topic of the relationships between families and education frameworks.

2. Legislation. It was proposed to anchor in the framework of primary legislation main processes that will define the giving of information to the parents, ongoing encounters between them and the education system, involvement of the parents in the main decisions relating to the child, and parental commitment.

3. Publication of a new director general's circular on the topic of the relationships between the family and the education system with emphasis on the early childhood period.

4. Training of educators for positions of management, teaching, and counseling. During the training of students of education in general and teacher and preschool teachers in particular every student will be required to learn a compulsory course on the topic of work with families. It is recommended that this course include theoretical knowledge and skills for work with families, including families with special characteristics, in addition to professional development for workers of education systems in actuality in the framework of professional development.

5. Appointment of a coordinator for the topic of the "relationship with families". In every school and in every cluster of preschools, from the educational faculty a professional will be appointed to serve as a coordinator for the topic of the "relationship with families". The coordinator will assess needs and initiate actions as necessary.

6. Special reference to the special education framework.

7. Recommendation for further research: It is recommended to perform additional research studies in the field of the relationships between the family and the education framework in the State of Israel, at all ages and especially during early childhood.

8. To establish a committee for the implementation of the recommendations of the document and its assimilation in the education system.

Today, seven years after the publication of the report, most of the recommendations of the committee have been implemented. However, the topic of the work with the parents remains one of the most complex roles in the preschool teacher's work and a topic that is greatly addressed by the preschool teachers, the assistants, the supervisors, and all the staff who support the preschool teacher.

The many facets of the profession of the preschool teacher are not separate and are tangential to one another and sum up to one holistic role. The multifaceted nature of the profession influences the manner of the training of the preschool teachers. The contemporary preschool teacher is supposed to be a figure with many diverse abilities and skills in different areas – personal, interpersonal, professional, managerial, and value-based. This understanding strengthens the question raised on the process of the training of the preschool teacher.

2.2.6 Care Aspects in the Work of the Preschool Teacher: Response to Physiological Needs

The young age of children in the preschools, three to six, necessitates care and supervision from the preschool teacher in a way that is different from that of the elementary school teacher. As the child grows up and becomes more independent, the facet of caregiving decreases. According to Hoyle (2001) and Hoffman (1981), the low status of teachers derives from their engagement with children: as the children are younger and the work has a greater aspect of care, the educator's status is lower. The status of the profession that engages in care in an industrialized society is low relative to that of other professions. Therefore, it is possible to see that there are countries where as the ages of the students the teacher teaches are higher, the teacher's salary is higher, as in the example of New Zealand, in which as the student is older, the teacher's status and salary are higher (Cushman, 2005).

This approach is commensurate with the theory of social negotiations. According to this theory, the prestige of a profession derives not only from the existence of knowledge but also from the quality of the client community. Or in other words, as the

clients are higher, the status is higher, the salary is higher, and the image is higher (Feigin, 1999).

Each one of the roles of the kindergarten teacher requires knowledge, skills, and values. To fill these roles in a beneficial manner, the kindergarten teacher needs to undergo appropriate training.

2.3 Training of the Preschool Teacher

The training of the preschool teachers in Israel is under the supervision and budgeting of the Ministry of Education and the academic responsibility is that of the Council for Higher Education. The training is training for preschool teachers for children aged birth to six. The issue of the threshold conditions required to be accepted to training for early childhood education has been discussed extensively around the world and relies on many research studies that show that the staff's level of training determines the quality of the care and education of children during early childhood and is very important to the children's emotional, physical, and intellectual development (European Commission - EACEA, 2016). In Israel preschool teachers are required as a threshold condition to work in the education system and to receive licensing and authorization for teaching, to have a teaching certificate for teaching young children, in addition to an academic bachelor degree and the completion of an induction year. The induction year for preschool teachers in early childhood includes an accompanying seminar, when the specialization needs to be in the first year for the teaching in the preschool. The new preschool teachers are employed for a minimum of twelve hours a week, which are one-third a position. They take a course that includes group and personal instruction of sixty hours. This course is mandatory in the framework outlined by the New Horizon Reform (Monikdam-Givon, 2017).

The engagement in the way of training has increased in recent years, from the knowledge that appropriate training of early childhood educators has the potential to influence not only the children but also their families and the entire community. The recognition of the centrality of early childhood and its importance forces processes of thinking and development and the taking of responsibility for appropriate training of

educators of young children that will contribute to the children's wellbeing, promote their achievements in the present and in the future, and help reduce social gaps and increase the social and economic strength of Israel. Optimal training will promote the quality of education for all children in the country and will promote a broad vision of development and education. For this purpose, increased budgetary and educational investment in the training for early childhood education is necessary. The committee appointed to examine the training of the educators in early childhood in 2017 was based on this understanding (Report of the Council for Higher Education[4], 2017).

The role of the preschool teachers is special in its nature and different from that of teachers in the school. The training of the preschool addresses the education of toddlers and children in an age range characterized by great change. Moreover, the preschool teachers educate the children most of the week for at least six hours a day. They are responsible for quality and optimal education in a variety of areas of development of the children – emotionally, socially, cognitively, and physically – and for a variety of areas of content, such as arithmetic, nature, literacy, art and literature, science, and technology (Report of the Council for Higher Education, 2017). The Ministry of Education is a partner in the training and confirms the acceptance of the students. Every year the threshold of the psychometric examination for acceptance is published. The number of students who learn in the early childhood programs is among the highest in the college, in comparison to the other departments, but the acceptance threshold for this track is in most of the colleges lower than accepted in the other learning programs. Consequently, for these programs students are accepted who have relatively low starting data. The low acceptance threshold influences the nature of the discourse between the lecturers and the students and lowers the requirements of them. Another expression of the low academic level of the students in the early childhood education programs is their low percentage of acceptance in the programs for excellent students. It was found that the number of early childhood education students who learn in these programs is negligible, apparently

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[4] The Report of the Council for Higher Education is a report written by the committee of experts that evaluated the curricula for the training of the teaching workers for early childhood education in the 2016-2017 academic year in the academic colleges in Israel. The report of this committee addressed the situation of early childhood education in the different colleges and presented recommendations for changes and improvements.

because of their low acceptance data (Report of the Council for Higher Education, 2017; Saban, 2012).

Since the conclusions of the Ariav Committee in 2006, which are based also on the Report of the Research for Activity in Early Childhood 2008, the departments that train for early childhood education in the colleges act according to the Ariav Outline[5] and there is a common core of studies, which crosses the age programs and teaching subjects, as a part of the curriculum in all the tracks. The base outline includes three focuses of study: (1) theoretical education studies that include education, pedagogy, and method in the teaching of the profession, (2) practicum in the school, and (3) research literacy in education and teaching. The committee thought that the field of training for teaching is an academic field in all respects, and therefore it is important to hold research activity in the institutions that train teachers. Nevertheless, there is flexibility. Every academic institution expresses its educational outlook and independence and develops unique and diverse programs for the training of teachers (Ariav, 2008; Saban, 2012).

The component of the practicum is divided into two main models, according to the choice of the training institution: the traditional model and the partnership model. The traditional model obligates the employment of a faculty member/instructor from the training institution, who is responsible for the instruction of the students in the training and for the assessment of their progress and their suitability to the profession. The student works in the practicum primarily with the mentor teacher and the relationship between the instructor and the mentor teacher is close and constant. The partnership model between the training institution and the educational institution calls for close systemic work between the training institution and the educational institution and obligates joint planning in the construction of the practical experience, ongoing coordination in the implementation, and involvement in the evaluation of the students. According to this model, every student has a direct mentor teacher and sometimes a number of mentor teachers and other role-holders to whose work she is exposed. Another model, which is less common, is called the professional school development model (PDS). In this model,

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[5] The Ariav Outline was formulated in the year 2008 following the Ariav Committee, which assembled in the year 2006 to examine the training of the teachers in Israel.

the teachers in the school also teach in the college and the lecturers in the college meet the students also in the school. The teachers and the lecturers are an inseparable part of the training system. The process of the professional development of the students includes learning, teaching, evaluation, and research and is accompanied by ongoing reflection (Silpoy & Dror, 2017).

According to the recommendations of the Report of the Council for Higher Education (2017), it is necessary to make changes in the training to teach the students how to teach all the areas of knowledge in the curricula, to add important contents designated for young children and the complexity and changes that are occurring in Israel society, to be certain of courses in language and expression, and to promote the research training they receive in order to contribute to the integration of research in the field work.

In addition, the development of the preschool teacher does not end when she has completed her studies in the college. The professional development accompanies the preschool teacher at different levels after her training and throughout all the stages of her professional career. According to the New Horizon agreement signed in 2007 between the Teachers Union, which is the organization that represents the preschool teachers in Israel (the Workers Union) and the Ministry of Education, the preschool teacher (who is academically educated and has a teaching license) is committed to learn so as to receive levels of promotion and salary increases. The preschool teacher can advance on the level of ranks once every three years. The ranks are divided into three groups: 2-3, 4-6, and 7-9. The hours of study depend on the years of experience and they are from 120 hours to 210 hours to receive the high ranks (Teachers Union, New Horizon, 2019).

This topic is discussed in the research study of Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005). On the one hand, the professional knowledge and skills acquired by the student teachers during the initial stage of formal training (first academic degree and teaching certificate) are those required by the teachers to be appropriate teachers ("a teacher who already studied"). Conversely, changes in the perceptions of the training for teaching and the professional development build an innovative perception of the professional identity in teaching, according to which the teaching worker is perceived as somebody who has

already learned but also is continuing to learn. This perception is called "adaptive expert", or in other words, the professional knowledge is not constant and closed knowledge of contents and abilities but rather a developing and expanding resource. The teacher must adapt and cope through this knowledge with changes and even initiate and innovate creatively. This perception influences the contents of the training for teaching and the professional development throughout the career (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). It would seem that the new perception of the "adaptive expert" harms the professional and personal image of teachers, since it may be interpreted as the emphasis of the lack of knowledge as a part of the professional identity in teaching. In other words, the knowledge that exists after the training is not adequate but conversely it is possible to see that only in dynamic professions that recognize their own value and consider the knowledge and experience to be sources of learning and development do the professionals have the right to professional definition (Kozminsky & Kloyer, 2010). This assumption is reinforced by the findings of additional research studies (Ball & Wilson, 1990; Leinhardt, 1989) that report that the teachers' knowledge in general and their content pedagogical knowledge in particular are also related to the years of experience in teaching.

3. Image of the Preschool Teacher

After we have seen the multiplicity of roles of the preschool teacher and the complexity of her role as well as the variety of abilities required for this, this chapter will discuss the figure of the preschool teacher. I will attempt to clarify the concept of the image. What is the image in the preschool teacher's eyes and how does society perceive her? What is the relationship between image, status, professional identity, and professional status? There is a puzzling gap between the satisfaction with the preschool teacher's work and the low social image of the profession and the importance and contribution of the occupation to the image in general and teaching in particular.

3.1 Self-Image

When we go to clarify how the image is built in society, we should first examine what the self-image is and how the person is perceived in general and his profession in

his own eyes. The self-image is a system of beliefs and opinions that the person has about himself, his values, his abilities, his skills, and his status in society. These beliefs determine how we perceive events in our world, how we behave, and what we can be (Halamish, 1996).

One of the first to address this topic was Carl Rogers (1902-1987), an American psychologist, one of the fathers of the humanist approach in psychology, in a theory he developed about the individual's personality. He created concepts such as the "real self" and the "ideal self". How does the person perceive himself and his abilities relative to others and their environment? What value is given to his activity? Already in the year 1909 Cooley developed the concept of the "self-image", his social aspect. He saw the self-image to be like a barometer that measures successes and failures. When the person's aspirations are realized and when he attains social esteem, the measure of the barometer will rise. Following failures, the self-image declines. This theory is called the "Looking Glass Self". The person receives a response on who he is and what his social value is. According to this barometer, the person imagines how society will respond and how it judges him (Cooley, 1909).

The self-image is acquired. Already from childhood, we accumulate information on the world and on ourselves. During the reciprocal activity with others and with the environment, we absorb the impressions on others and on ourselves. Our self-image develops following assessments, opinions, and responses of significant others (Rosman, Zalsman, & Frankl, 1993). Kurtz (2010), in contrast, differentiates in this matter between the child and the adult and emphasizes that the self-image is a system of traits and assessments that the person attributes to himself. The development of the self-image occurs already at a young age when the child evaluates himself, his physical appearance, his traits, and his abilities, while comparing to others and while receiving responses from the environment about all this with a strict look (Kurtz, 2010). These statements are based on the research works of Bailey (2003), who holds that adults deal with judgmental responses in a less severe manner. He presents definitions of the concept of the self-image and maintains that it is very important to understand the concept and to learn and identify the factors that influence the self-image (Bailey, 2003). Brade (1997, in Bailey,

2003) defines the self-image as an individual assessment of each one of himself using self-judgment. Rand (1993, in Bailey, 2003) notes that the self-image is the confidence in the ability to think. Sigelman (1999, in Bailey, 2003) speaks about a general assessment, which provides value to the person (high or low). This assessment is based on positive or negative self-perception. In general, these researchers hold that the influence of the environment on the self-image is individual, but it is possible to understand that there is agreement regarding the fact that the self-image is related to the human environment, its values, and the real or perceived attitude of the people who are significant to the individual (Harrari, 1998). The self-image builds the self-identity.

3.2 Self-Identity

The self-identity is a broader concept than the self-image. One of the most known definitions of the self-identity is that of Erikson (1959). Erikson defined the self-identity as the integration of the identities from childhood with the experiences and specializations that developed over the course of life. Erikson, who was one of the students of Freud, the father of the theory of development, addressed the personal identity as developing in universal stages. The formation of the identity is a process that is related to the reciprocal relationships with society. The feeling of the identity includes the mastery of the problems of childhood and the true willingness to face the challenges of adulthood. This approach is the traditional approach to the definition of the identity. The later postmodern approach addresses the identity as dependent on the context and the culture and changing throughout life. The identity includes the values, principles, and roles that the person adopted and adjusted for himself. The subject has different opportunities during his life to clarify his identity, to examine it, to renew it, and to update it and in essence a situation is created of the multiplicity of identities (Schachter, 2004). In essence, the identity can be defined through the question of "who or what is the person?" and the different responses that the person answers to this question or through the meanings attributed by others (Beijaard, 1995). The identity is not the person's constant attribution but a developing and changing characterization. The development of the self-identity occurs as a continuous process between the person and his environment. The process of the creation of the identity generally includes the choice of the profession

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and the preparation towards the re-evaluation of religious and moral beliefs, the formation of a political ideology, and the adoption of social roles, including roles related to sexuality, marriage, and parenting (Harter, 1990, in Sroufe, Cooper, & Dehart, 1998).

Different researchers studied the identity of the self from different aspects: from the psychological aspect the reference is to the self-awareness, existentialism (Frankl, 1968; Shotter & Gergen, 1989), from the social aspect (Rosman, Zalsman, & Frankl, 1990) the reference is to the influence of society on the development of the identity, and from the cognitive aspect the reference is to the processes of the formation of the identity, the processes of the collection, organization, and internalization of information into the individual's personality (Archer, 1982). The research sees the creation of the identity to be a continuous process, which the individual experiences beginning from the creation of identity, the extension of the identity, and the holding of changes in it. Processes of the construction of the identity occur over time and during the creation of reciprocal relationships with others (Cooper & Olson, 1996).

3.3 Professional Image and Professional Identity

The self-image constructs the professional identity. Friedman (2000) maintains that the professional identity is the person's answer to himself in the question of 'who am I as a professional?' and it is a part of the definition of the self-identity. This definition is very similar to his definition of the concept of the "professional self-image" and indeed Friedman does not differentiate between the two concepts. Similarly, Kuzminsky (2008) notes that the professional identity is the answer to the question of 'who am I, or what am I, as a professional?'. Tickle (1999) broadens the meaning of the professional identity and in essence the professional image is a part of the identity and is included in it. He describes and defines the professional identity as the professional person's feeling of belonging to his profession and identification with it. The professional identity includes four components that are reciprocally related.

1. The image that the profession has in society and in the eyes of the practitioners of the profession.
2. The image that the professional has of his profession.

3. The professional self-image of the profession, what he sees as important in his work and his professional life on the basis of his experiences and according to his personal background

4. The image that the professional has in the eyes of others: clients, colleagues, role partners, or the public at large.

Hence, it is possible to identify that the professional image that the person has about his profession is influenced by the social image of the profession and the reverse is true.

3.4 Professional Identity in Teaching

Different researchers attempted to cope with the question of the definition of the professional identity in teaching. On the one hand, there are researchers who support the traditional approach according to which the identity in teaching develops in stages over the years. The teacher undergoes experiences, crises, copings, until the formation, the arrival at the stage of professionalism. On the other hand, researchers maintain that the teacher has professional identities and not one identity and they develop over the years, improving and becoming complex. The teachers' identity is a developing phenomenon (Beijaard, Paulien, & Verloop, 2004). Therefore, the achievement of professionalism is made possible when the teacher develops tools for coping, examines and studies her work in a reflective and critical manner, and develops continually (Zilberstein et al., 1998).

Gee (2001) describes the following four sub-identities of the professional identity of teachers:

1. Nature identity. The person is what he is in terms of nature, biology, genetics. The reference is to the ability and appearance.

2. Institutional identity. The identity is determined according to the position or role of the person in society. In the example of the preschool teacher's role, the role gives her rights, duties, and commitments, which are formally defined by the education system, the professional association, parents' associations, law, etc.

3. Discourse identity. The identity is expressed in traits and achievements, as they are identified by others and as they are created and preserved in the discourse interactions with the others.

4. Affinity identity. The belonging to different affinity groups.

Like Gee (2001), Rodgers and Scott (2008) assumed four assumptions on the professional identity. It is built on the basis of diverse relationships (social, cultural, historical, and political), it is built from reciprocal relationships with others, it is dynamic, and it attempts to be coherent.

According to Kuzminsky and Kloyer (2010), the integration between the sub-identities is what creates the professional identity in teaching. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) reviewed 22 research studies that address the professional identity of teachers and found that there is no one clear definition of the professional identity and that there are different definitions based on the teachers' interpretation of the identity.

This review and additional research (Tickle, 1999) indicate that it is possible to differentiate between two main components: how the teacher sees herself, what is important in her work and in her professional life, and how she is perceived by society, a feeling that creates perceptions of consumers, parents, students, and colleagues. Tickle (1999) even notes the interaction between what the teacher feels and what the society thinks about her.

Hence, it is possible to understand that the identity of the profession and its image in society are not completely separate concepts. The identity is defined frequently as a collection of characteristics, such as knowledge, attitudes, and expectations, which are attributed to the profession, both by those who belong to it and by those who do not engage in it (Stout, 2004). In other words, the professional identity and the professional image are influenced by one another.

3.5 Sociology and Image

Theories in sociology and social psychology that engage in the social image present the outlooks of other people about us and the groups to which we belong. These

theories embody a wide range of psychological processes, the understanding of the concept of the social image, and the way in which the image develops. The understanding of these theories may help the understanding of the teacher's image and how to advance it. Understanding the social theories may help understand the teacher's image, which may help understand how people perceive other people, how a social image is created, and how it is formed. The theory of social representation and the theory of social identity developed in the field of social psychology. These two theories belong to the European approach of this field. This approach is different from the American approach in that it tends to engage more in the social-cultural panel and less in laboratory researches (Farah Bidjari, 2011). The social representation theory was developed in France at the start of the 1960s by Moscovici (2001), who placed the social representation theory on the seam that separates between sociology and anthropology and social psychology. The concept of social representations originates from the term collective representations, which was coined by one of the fathers of sociology, Durkheim, in the last decade of the 19th century. Durkheim used collective representations as forms of knowledge and internalized beliefs existing in premodern societies. The collective representations according to Durkheim are used to preserve the cohesion and stability of this society. Moscovici, unlike Durkheim, conceived the concept of 'social representations' to note forms of knowledge, thoughts, emotions, and approaches that characterize modern society. Unlike collective representations, social representations are perceived as dynamic, appearing in the social space and changing rapidly, being published and changing frequently. The lack of stability that characterizes modern societies and the extension of the public information databases are, according to Moscovici (2011), the main factors responsible for the creation of social representations.

The social representations are created through a process of dialogue, negotiations, and daily practice by one or more of the following groups who are found in the relationship – small talk in a café, social meetings, and other routine activities have an active role in the process of the building of social representations.

According to Moscovici (2001), a powerful source for participation in the building of social representations is mass media. The extension of the circle of influence

of the modern media has accelerated the process of social representation. In premodern societies, the collective representations are stable throughout very long periods and their validity was not cast in doubt. In modern societies, the process of making scientific knowledge into knowledge shared by society at large is the main factor for the creation of social representations.

According to the theory, social representations are a very important part in the building of our world and the perception of our reality. They enable us to understand the communication between different groups. The identification of social representations, the exposure of their origin, and the exposure of the social relationships that led to their creation can without a doubt contribute to the better understanding of cultural and social activity (Farah Bidjari, 2011).

The goal of social representations is to make the unfamiliar and threatening into the familiar and accessible. Every time we encounter unfamiliar knowledge, a sense of lack of satisfaction and threat is created on the social identity. The new knowledge that arises threatens the previous knowledge we had – the previous social representations. This threat leads to lack of stability and in the end to the formation of new social representations and hence to the restoration of the stability that had eroded (Moscovici, 2001).

To cope with the processing and cataloguing of considerable social information, we divide society into categories and social representations that help us organize the tremendous knowledge of the social world: when one representation comes into the awareness, it also raises other representations related to it. In our minds there are two alternative processes, first assimilation – the integration of the reality in a given schema and second adjustment – a process in which the schema undergoes change and adjustment to reality to include unfamiliar phenomena.

We create categories that unite a group of family-like items and are collected together under a common denominator. In the process of classification (the division of the world into categories), we identify an item and affiliate it into an appropriate category. The self-classification is how the individual defines himself and places himself

in the group. This self-classification creates conditions of the group members' behavior and self-elimination when I am a part of the group (Hopkins & Reicher, 1996). The self-classification is very important to us. According to Turner (1982), this is a cognitive mechanism that enables group behavior. Social classification occurs when we classify people according to sex, age, profession, and other traits in a process called social classification. Social classification is a natural action that helps us process information more effectively.

The classification of categories enables us to use the experience of the past in an encounter with people from the same category and to create rapidly an impression of new people. Our tendency of classification has a meaningful disadvantage: the collection of people causes us to perceive the difference between groups as greater than what it really is and causes us to be contemptuous of the differences existing between people who belong to the same group in the group.

The belonging of people to different groups causes us to perceive one another as different from what they are, while the belonging to the same group causes us to perceive people as more similar to them. For each group, we create typical characteristics, prototypes, representations of categories. We also create schema – cognitive structures that include diverse knowledge on situations, people, or groups. This creates more expectations and directly influences behavior and the interpretation of the reality. There are different types of schema, such as personal schema, which organizes knowledge about other people and includes the traits and preferences of a certain person, self schema – the organization of the self-image. Shema relating to these specific groups address each group to which we belong (we belong to a number of groups with which we identify) (Brewer & Nakamura, 1984).

The schemas that we manage are on internal groups (ourselves) and external groups, but the main ones are external groups. The schemas that pertain to groups of people, or by another name stereotypes, are a common social belief about groups or types of people. Stereotypes are very strong, and they are practiced and almost unthinking (Turner, 1982). Stereotypes are beliefs about traits common to people who belong to a

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certain social group. When we address the person in a stereotypical manner, we attribute to him certain traits that we conclude only from the person's affiliation with the group. The stereotypes are pictures that we connect to another person, to the group, or to another group. The social concept is created from stable pictures that the person has towards objects in the society in which he lives, when one category is the perception towards professional groups, even when we hear the name of the group we see a broad system that addresses their language, education, physical abilities, and external appearance of the group members, such as construction workers or doctors. As many more professions have different pictures, they will be perceived in a different way, and the reverse, since they have similar pictures, society will address them, as very similar to one group (Brown, 1995).

Another theory that facilitates the understanding of the creation of the social image is the theory of social identity that engages in the processes of the formation of the social identity. This theory is associated with the European school of social psychology. The thinker of the theory was Tajfel, and the theory differentiates between two main types of identity: personal identity and social identity. Personal identity is composed of traits and characteristics that are expressed mainly in the interpersonal systems of relationships. The social identity is composed of definitions and generalizations that create group affiliation (Hogg & Abrams, 1988).

The social image not only influences the way in which others perceive the group but also is a component in the individual's social identity, regarding which there is broad reference in the theory of social classification and the theory of social identity (Brown, 1988; Ellemers, Spears, & St Doosje, 1999). According to the theory of social identity, the person's self-image derives not only from the person's identity and achievements but also from the status and achievements of the different groups to which he belongs. The self-image is composed of the personal identity and social identity, which is based on the group affiliation. People aspire to preserve a positive self-image and to increase their self-esteem.

People formulate self-images from social comparison with other people in their environment. According to this theory, exactly as the personal identity is created in comparison to other people, the social identity is created in comparison between internal groups and other groups. The integration of these two assumptions lead to a theory that people will aspire to perceive their group as distinct positively from other groups, in order to increase their self-esteem (Brown, 1988; Ellemers, Spears, & St Doosje, 1999).

Identity addresses the term of habit. This term describes a constellation of perceptions and basic assumptions, which guides every person from his childhood regarding the social reality in which he lives, the group to which he belongs and in which he acts (Bourdieu, 2005). Professions such as education, nursing care, and blue collar professions are found at the bottom of the priorities. Every profession becomes an inseparable part of the structured identity of the practitioner, which enables him to communicate with those around him. This is a framework for reciprocal relations, one-way and sometimes two-way, which facilitates the understanding of the world around the professional and the implementation of required methods of behavior from a predefined repertoire.

In every social professional association there are agreements about the definition and limitations of the profession. The popularity of every profession is measured according to the gap between what exists and what is desired. This gap creates stereotypes, which influence many areas: public opinion, willingness of young people and adults to engage in the profession, the development of the profession and its businesses. Different models and theories attempt to explain how the image of a certain field of occupation is created. The person's status in society is determined by his profession, his occupation, and his belonging to a group. Three areas are addressed; the ideal, the realistic, and the reflective (Bourdieu, 2005).

The ideal image describes the 'desired' image that was determined by the groups of reference, in this case the teachers or academia or Ministry of Education. This is the image that appears perfect and that people aspire to reach. The real image describes the

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profession as it is in reality. The reflected image describes the interpretation of the profession of the way in which others address it.

The relationship between these three categories is what determines the nature of the profession. Maximum fit between the three image structures will emphasize and reinforce the professional identity, while lack of fit can constitute a source of tension, frustration, and lack of clarity. These can detrimentally influence the care provided in the past and to be provided in the future. The gaps between the different categories of the image may lead to a process of change and advancement (Rox & Schwartzold, 2000).

Another tendency of people is social comparison, according to the Social Comparison Theory of Festinger (1954). We form the knowledge on ourselves through the social environment and evaluate ourselves through comparison with the attitudes and abilities of others, who are generally similar to us. Here come other illusions of a meaningful phenomenon. The homogeneity of the foreign group – we tend to assume that we are unique and different from one another, while "they – they are all identical". We tend to see more similarities between the members of the foreign group than among the members of the local group. Two explanations were given for this tendency. The first explanation suggests that this illusion derives from the gap in the amount of information we have on the internal and external groups and because of the differences in the degree of familiarity with members of the two groups. The second explanation suggests that the illusion derives from the differences in importance that the internal and foreign groups have for us, and since the foreign group is more important to us, we are prevented from phrasing a more precise concept.

This motivation causes us to evaluate the difference in the inner group as higher. This theory can help us understand the attitude of society towards teachers, kindergarten teachers, and care providers of infants as one issue (Rox & Shwartzold, 2000).

The social image influences the interpersonal relationships, the choice of the partner, the processes between groups, the experience and the expression of emotions, gender differences, influences on behavior, and building social status and maintaining it. The centrality of the social image in social psychology is expressed in the need to

connect (Maslow, 1963). Social belonging causes people to pursue specific social images, and they may put forth great efforts to great a certain impression and to belong to a certain group. A person finds his place on the stratified ladder in society on the basis of his inherent abilities and professional training. As the status of the profession is higher, he rises and improves (Gilat & Wongrowitz, 2018). The professional status is a part of the mosaic of other professions and depends on personal and group variables such as academic and pedagogical education, organizational strength, public support, experience, sex, and prestige. Social forces created in professional organizations and supported by the professional elites that develop an ethical code that constitutes a symbol of affiliation to the organization (Weick, 1992).

According to Ben Peretz (2009), sociologists explain the status of a profession according to different theories:

1. The functional theory. It measures the importance of the profession according to its contribution to society and the resources that professionals have to offer society (Sholov-Barkan, 1991).
2. The social bargaining theory. According to this theory, the prestige of a profession derives not only from the existence of knowledge but also from the quality of the client community. In other words, as the clients are higher, the status is higher (Feigin, 1999).
3. The ecological theory. According to this approach, the situation of the profession changes according to the conditions of the environment. The professional status is influenced by the social organization, political conditions, economic conditions, and technological innovations (Ben David, 1980).

Moreover, the status of the profession in the society in which we live is composed of professional prestige and evaluation of professionalism. Professional prestige expresses the public assessment of the profession as opposed to its evaluation of other professions. The evaluation of the professionalism is based on the evaluation of the public of the professional skills of the professional. Other researchers include in the social status of the profession additional components, such as the degree of influence the professional person has in society, the social recognition and financial rewards, the

attractiveness of the profession in society, and so on (Crompton, 1998; Hall & Langton, 2006).

When we examine the status of the profession in society, we examine how the professional status is perceived by others, the students' parents, peers, and even the self.

The psychoanalyst and thinker Lacan (1977) developed a theory that addresses the relationship between the topic and the abstract and absolute entity that he calls "the big other". The other gives the topic a reflection of the self, an ideal self with which he is invited to identify. However, full identification with an ideal picture is never possible. The respondent cannot acquire an identity, meaning, or coherence except through identification with a specific symbolic system and cannot completely resolve his identification with the symbolic conversation system. He never can identify completely with the desired image, and thus the symbolic system itself permanently destroys the very foundations of its self-perception. Lacan determines the model of identification as the "stage of appearance" among infants. He defines this as an imaginary system of relations since the child identifies with an image that is not himself but is outside of him – he identifies with the way in which others see him. The respondent's attitude to the image is ambivalent. According to Lacan (1977), in this initial stage of development the infant experiences his body as a collection of emotions that are not related to a uniform body. The self-identity in the mirror gives him happiness, but also the alienation of the image that he does not share. According to this model, every person needs a third side to validate the image according to which he knows himself – he in truth.

There is an infinite number of mirrors of this type in the world: a profession considered a male profession, desired professions, etc. The dissonance created between the inner sense and the lack of recognition from the environment in the end creates a rebellion against the other, in the best case, or internalization and closing of the other, in the worst case.

In recent decades in Israel society we have witnessed changes in the prestige of the professions. The salary that the profession brings has become the most important

determinant, and the requirements of education have become less important in the prestige of the professions (Krauss & Hartman, 1994).

This change is a change in the values that led to a further decline in the status of the professions in which for the most part women were characterized generally by a relatively high education and low salary, such as teacher, nurse, social worker. As the hierarchy is higher, in the scope of the occupations there are fewer women and more men (Friedman et al., 2006). The financial compensation is less, determining the female stigma on the teaching profession. All these factors, and others, form and influence the social importance, the prestige, and the professional ability of the Israeli teachers and their image in society (Cushman, 2005).

3.6 The Image of the Teaching Profession in the World and in Israeli Society

According to Zucker (1986), the image of a profession is related to the public's trust and respect for the profession. There are three types of trust. The first is a trust-based process, the building of long-term trust. The second is a trust-based personality, similar to me (gender, race, culture), and the third is institutional trust - trust is not toward a particular person but towards the organization or profession and anyone who belongs to it. When examining the global status of teachers, the teaching profession in the world shows that in most countries the status is low and the status of teacher unions is even lower (Stromquist, 2018).

The professional identity of the teachers is described as a personal and social biography, and a part of it is subject to choice and another part is in the hands of society (Goodson, 1992). There is agreement among the researchers that there is great erosion in the teachers' professional image, and it is even possible to speak about the "de-professionalization" of the teaching. Cohen, Higgins, and Ambrose (1999) note that the teaching profession has become the scapegoat of all society's ills. Many expect that education will come and correct society.

Research studies that clarify the teacher's image in society around the world have examined the attitudes of different groups towards the status of teaching. In England, New Zealand, Sweden, and Japan there are contradictory findings and in parallel a decline in the teacher's status. Research studies performed in England are especially interesting (Hargreaves, Cunningham, Hansen, Mclntyre, Oliver, & Pell, 2007). They indicate that the public perceives the status of teaching to be at a higher level than the teachers themselves perceive themselves, thus indicating the teachers' professional image about themselves is lower than the image society holds. The McKinsey Report (2007) also addressed the issue of the teacher's status and compared between 25 education systems around the world. It describes public opinion surveys performed in Singapore and South Korea (where the teacher's status is high), which showed that the public at large believes that teachers contribute to society more than do other professionals. Moreover, young teachers indicated that this is the reason they were first attracted to the profession – to enjoy the high status. The McKinsey Report (2007) creates a relationship between the teachers' quality and the professional prestige. It is a circle of success versus the circle of failure. In countries where the profession suffers from a low status it attracts less talented candidates and thus the level of teaching is pushed lower down and then the quality of people it attracts is lower. According to the report, these issues depend on the policy.

Regarding the image of the teacher in Israel society, the learning of the teacher's status generally occurs from two main approaches. The first approach is a sociological approach, which sees the teachers' prestige (in comparison to the prestige of other professions) to be a main element in the definition of its social status. The second approach examines the teachers' social situation from a phenomenological perspective of the teaching practitioners (Gilat & Wongrowitz, 2018). A research study performed in Israel sought to examine the relative position of the teachers' status in Israeli society in comparison to the status of other professions (doctor, hi-tech worker, lawyer, teacher, social worker, and career military person). The research questions were answered using a survey that lasted three years (2014, 2015, 2016) and was filled out by 1502 participants (about 500 a year). The research findings indicate that the elements of social status of the profession are the prestige of the profession in society's eyes, the importance of the

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profession to society, the material rewards for those engaging in the profession, the professional skills required by the professional, the degree of attractiveness of the profession in society, and the possibility of the professional's personal development (Gilat & Wongrowitz, 2018).

In Israel, like many countries around the world, occupational alternatives were developed for the teaching profession. Some countries attract the young generation, and for this more than one channel of action is required to improve the image of the profession. Many countries declare that the teaching profession is preferred by them, and therefore they increase the teachers' salary to encourage the demand for this field (for example, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Japan, and Singapore). Some of them add advantages such as housing (Singapore), some of them enable professional development in other countries (such as Japan and Canada), and some encourage professional development of teachers throughout their career (such as Ireland, Canada, and Japan). There are steadily increasing demands for teacher training. Most of the countries undertake a multidisciplinary or multisystem approach to the improvement of the quality of the human capital in teaching and in education for the improvement of the teacher's image and the attraction of higher quality people to the profession (Wolansky, 2011).

Fisherman (2016) describes the situation in Israel in his book *Professional Identity and Burnout among Teaching Workers.* This is a situation in which the teacher's status steadily declines as a consequence of the shattering of the ideal of the state. To understand the image of the teaching profession, a research was conducted that turned to the young people who do not intend to go into the profession (Arnon, Greensfeld, Zeiger, Frankl, & Rubin, 2015). The respondents were asked to rank the teaching profession on a scale of sixteen professions. The findings indicate that teaching in the elementary school is ranked in a far lower place (eleven out of sixteen), after professions that require less training, at the head of the list of blue collar professions (professions such as bank teller, librarian, salesperson in a book store), which have the lowest status of the list of the professions. In addition, the research (Arnon, Greensfeld, Zeiger, Frankl, & Rubin, 2015) examined the question of "what could attract you to teaching?". The research indicated a high rate of general-negative responses like "nothing could bring me to this profession"

alongside a very low number of general-positive responses that say "everything" and delineates main topics that cause the rejection from the profession, conditions, salary and status, poor discipline, motivation, and burnout. In contrast, main topics that greatly attract young people to engage in the profession are sense of ideology and mission, feelings of satisfaction that derive primarily from the direct interpersonal relationship that the profession enables, and interest in the field of knowledge they teach. It is apparent that the low image is one of the influential factors distancing young people from the profession. This research (Arnon, Greensfeld, Zeiger, Frankl, & Rubin, 2015) also examined the image of the teacher in the eyes of young people in Israel in the comparison between the preschool/elementary school, the middle school, and the high school. The research findings show that the teachers' status steadily increases as the learning framework rises: the status of the teachers in the preschool/elementary school is the lowest and the status of their peers in the high school is the highest, when the status of the teachers in the middle school is between them.

3.7 Teacher Image in Poland

After the fall of communism in Poland, there was a very high demand for better education among the Polish public, a demand that created pressure on the government to act and reform education. Until 2000, Poland's education system was considered to be below average. Its main purpose was to "train skilled workers" in the spirit of communism. Most of the students studied at the age of fourteen in vocationally oriented schools, and only 14% of students went to higher education. In 1999, the Polish government succeeded in broadening the education system. The stated goals of the education system have changed and emphasize the right of every student to receive education and education for their development, as well as the need for the education system to constitute a system that complements the education each child receives in his or her family. In 2012, it was decided to begin school at age six, the state was divided into districts, and autonomy was granted to each district and each teacher in his or her classroom. As a result of the existing reform, there has been a rise in all metrics, and Poland continues to innovate. The middle school was gradually phased out since 2017, and elementary school education is for eight years. In 2019 secondary school reform

began in 2020. The state set the threshold for teaching: teachers can only be academics, so 97.5% of teachers are graduates. Additional threshold requirements are good knowledge in a foreign language and proficiency in teaching in two areas of knowledge - primary (elementary) and secondary. New teachers entering the system are defined as "conditional" in their first year of teaching, and if they pass this threshold, they are given another two years in which they are frequently checked. After a teacher goes through these two stages, she or he becomes a "teacher in charge." Furthermore, for highly experienced teachers, another rank is reserved. Such teachers can receive the title of "Honorary Professor of Education" by the school. To receive the undergraduate degree, teachers should receive a recommendation from their superiors and pass a committee and an examination. The degree gives teachers a high honor and higher salary. The growth of the educational system in Poland is the result of the continuous cultivation of education, which contributes to a high teacher status in Poland, and there is also a great demand for the teaching profession, although teachers' wages are not high (FRSE, 2018)

However, gaps arise between the necessity of the profession and its importance, its image and the low remuneration received by the teachers. When researchers asked research respondents what their preferred profession for their children is, a high percentage does not want a teaching profession for their children. This gap is strongly reflected in the findings from surveys, and it is evident that there is ambivalence in the social approach in Poland to the teaching profession as well as inconsistency. On the one hand, the teaching profession is viewed positively, while on the other hand, people do not want their children to choose it. There is also a significant dissonance between the social and teacher expectations of the teacher. There is a connection between the teachers' social expectations and their professional status in society. Since the expectations of the Polish teacher are high, society expects the teacher to have a high level of skills as early as possible, which is not possible (Lewowicki, 1994).

The social perception of the teaching profession is also influenced by the fact that the teaching profession is subject to many legal regulations, not always consistent and sometimes contradictory, as well as control of the teacher from above. The result is a large gap between teachers' expectations and the real possibilities of meeting those

expectations. These gaps create a very low image of the teachers themselves, who do not see this profession as highly valued socially or as valuable to themselves. 84% are dissatisfied or even disappointed with the teaching profession. The recommendation is to redefine the role of the teacher in the new age in order to promote the image of the teacher in Poland, namely to change from the traditional teacher role as a knowledge "information pipeline" with a monopoly on knowledge to the contemporary teacher who organizes a tailored and safe learning environment that provides access to knowledge. In addition, recommendation is to lower teachers' expectations that more institutions will be responsible for education and to realize that the teachers' image depends on many factors and socio-cultural contexts that require a longer time horizon, especially in the era of change (Królikowska & Stempińska, 2014).

3.8 Image of the Preschool Teacher

The low image of the preschool teachers is discussed in the article of Stodney (2009). She presents research works that indicate a gap between the preschool teachers' perception of their role and the way in which they perform it in actuality. On the one hand, they are accepting of their choice and they have professional pride and prominent love of the profession, while on the other hand the reality is not commensurate with the ideal and value-based perceptions of their role. She hypothesizes that the work in the preschool entails great difficulty in terms of the responsibility assigned to the preschool teachers and in terms of the multiplicity and complexity of assignments and they report difficulties such as management of systems of relationships with different organizations in the preschool staff and with additional role holders outside of the preschool. Sometimes the work with the parents is perceived as a component that is most complex and difficult in the preschool teacher's role, which derives from the expectations society has of the preschool teacher, expectations that are defined as not especially realistic in light of the conditions under which the preschools operate. In addition, there are professional demands and frequent changes in the pedagogical field (Byrne, 1994; Eisenberg, 2005, 2007; Meirav, 2005; Oshrat, 2000; Tal, 2007; in Stodney, 2009). The research of Fisherman (2016) reinforces these data, comparing between preschool teachers, elementary school teachers, and secondary school teachers. The research shows

that the overall score of professional identity and the different factors of the professional identity are statistically significantly higher than the scores of the preschool teachers. The research relies on Rodd (1998, in Fisherman, 2016, p. 57), who lists five characteristics in the management of early childhood education, which derive from the characteristics of the age and the structure of the educational institution.

1. The preschool teacher works directly with the parents, the staff, and the children, which requires abilities of management and communication.
2. The preschool teacher is responsible for all the children throughout the entire day and in all areas of development and knowledge.
3. Children are especially vulnerable and a high level of self-discipline and professional ethics is required.
4. The preschool teacher's work is performed in professional isolation. A high level of skill in making decisions and solving problems is required.
5. The wide range of ages obligates special abilities. It is possible that because of the great complexity of the preschool teacher's role, her professional identity is lower than the professional identity of the teacher in the elementary school (Rodd, 1998, in Fisherman, 2016).

In contrast, Kotler and Fox (1995) and Kotler and Anderson (1996) emphasize the importance of the image of the educational institution in the community in which it is found and broaden the discussion about the image. Kotler and Fox (1995) define the image as the constellation of the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that the person has about a certain object. Kotler and Anderson (1996) explain that there are concepts that explain the term of image and it is important to differentiate between them. They are attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes; they are similar but not identical concepts. In other words, it is likely that the person has a positive attitude towards the profession but a negative image of the professional. The attitudes are related to background, experience, and personal motives. The image is different from the stereotype, which is a generalized image of a negative or positive opinion that has become entrenched in the public and generally there is agreement on it as opposed to an image that is more personal, changeable, and dependent on personal experience. This explanation can facilitate the understanding of the gap between the importance of early childhood education and the

low image of the profession of the preschool teacher. Oplatka (2003) extends the scope: he addresses the image of the institutions for the training of educators or in other words he attempts to engage in the root of the problem, from the assumption that if the training is perceived as of higher quality then the image will improve. He emphasizes that the process of academization undertaken in Israel in the colleges of teacher training has the goal of raising the teacher's professional image in society. The colleges have transformed from seminars to organizations that are similar to and imitate the actions of the universities and the academic degree has become necessary. Ben-David (1986, in Oplatka, 2003) explains that this process that has occurred in Israel is very similar to what has happened in most of the countries of the world. The institutions of teacher training change the image from an institution that engages only in practical training/practicum to an institution that directs also to theoretical training, like the universities do. This change in the image is supposed to contribute also to the change in the teacher's image.

According to all the aforementioned, in the past decade the professional image of the teacher in Israel and around the world has been studied and from different angles. Research reports that review the different research works and articles on the topic were written (Hargreaves & Hopper, 2006; Oplatka, 2009).

The research studies generally address the image of the teacher in the elementary school or the high school and the image of the teacher and the teaching profession in the opinion of young people in Israel has been examined (Arnon et al., 2005). Research studies were conducted for the most part by the teachers of teachers, when the goal is to clarify how to recruit high quality personnel to teaching.

Oshrat (1999) also emphasizes the difficulties that cause the low professional image of the preschool teacher. In her opinion, the preschool teachers work with little professional assistance, fulfill many functions, work without stop (almost), and meet with the parents on a daily basis. In addition to the roles of teaching and education, the preschool teacher is also the manager of the preschool. Other researchers address the gap between the difficulty in work in early childhood and the low image of the profession and

the preschool teacher in the public (Goldstein, 1998; Johnston, & Brinamen, 2005). In their opinion, it derives from the lack of awareness of the high intellectual requirements of the profession and derives from the fact that their work is perceived as the work of mothers. According to them, a definition suitable for the profession that would allow the practitioners of the role to understand the uniqueness in their professional role and to convey it to others is lacking. As aforementioned, there is overwhelming agreement about the complexity of the preschool teacher's role and the difficulties this profession entails, and therefore the gap between the recognition of the importance of the profession and its social image is puzzling. Society recognizes the importance of the profession of educator and its necessity, but its image is low (Magan, 2015).

When examining the status of the preschool teacher in Israel as opposed to the status of the teacher in Israel, the status of the preschool teacher is even lower than the status of the teacher, which is also inferior in comparison to the OECD countries. Most of the students in the early childhood education tracks are female, and very few men study in this track, no more than fifteen a year. A large number of the men turn to the private preschools. In the year 2017 about 99.2% of those employed in Jewish state preschool education are women and only 0.8% are men. In state religious education this percentage is less and in Arab education it is 0%. According to a datum published about the years 2016/2017, the total number employed in the Ministry of Education in Israel is about 113 male preschool teachers and about 14,182 female preschool teachers (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Even among the women, this is not the highest level of students, not in social-economic terms and not in terms of the academic achievements (Trachtenberg, 2011), although recent research studies indicate a constant trend of improvement, especially among the secondary school teachers and primarily in state education (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Among the researchers there is a difference of opinion about the importance and centrality of the salary and its influence on the image of the teaching profession in contrast to other variables, such as work conditions, perception of the public of the teaching profession, or others who maintain that the teacher herself can influence the image of the profession (Blass, 2009). The raising of this topic into the teachers' awareness will contribute to the sought-for change. Hoyle (2001) maintains that the professional assessment of the teachers is a field depending on teachers and only they can

improve it, through the display of expertise, control of skills of teaching, and great commitment to the children's success.

3.9 Gap between the Importance of the Profession of the Preschool Teacher and Its Low Image in Society

This gap raises additional questions, when the findings of the Report of the National Authority of Measurement and Assessment (RAMA, 2017) are studied. The report examines the parents' satisfaction with the performance of the preschool, as did the research of Gilat, Rosso Zimet, Tal, and Tabak (2018). The findings indicate that the decisive majority of the parents (about 90%) reported high general satisfaction with the preschool their child attends. The parents perceive the profession as important, but when they were asked if they want their children to engage in this profession, only 14% answered that they want this. The parents also rank the profession relative to other professions such as doctor and lawyer as inferior, and after it there comes the social worker. In other words, despite the high level of satisfaction, the image of the profession in the parents' eyes is inferior. In the research studies presented by Ben Alia (2000), he differentiates between the parents and does not address them as one unit. He compares the parents' perceptions and expectations from the education system and differentiates between groups in disadvantaged neighborhoods and periphery communities, when they express lack of satisfaction that originates in the level of the academic achievements, while in the more established groups the source of the discomfort pertains to the parents' perceptions regarding the inability of the system to ensure their children a high quality and challenging education.

Other research studies address the gap between the difficulty in the work in early childhood and the low image of the profession and the preschool teacher in public (Goldstein, 1998; Johnston & Brinamen, 2005). They hold that it derives from the lack of awareness of the high intellectual requirements of the profession and derives from the fact that their work is perceived as the work of mothers (Sims & Hutchins 2000). They assert that the lack of a definition suited to the profession, which would allow those who

are engaging in the role to understand the uniqueness in their professional role and to transmit it to others.

4. Influence of the Mass Media on the Professional Image of Teachers in Israel

The transmission to others is undertaken through the different media, and the media have the power to change the public opinion and to improve images. In this chapter, I will attempt to clarify the influence of the media on the image of the teaching profession in society, and I will examine the relationship between media and education and the implications on the teacher's image.

4.1 Models of Communication and Influence on the Reality

There are different models that address the concept of communication and describe graphically as processes that occur in the action of communication. The first was the linear model of Lasswell (1948, in Kaspy & Limor, 1992). This model describes the process of communication as composed of five questions. Who? Says what? To whom? On what channel? And with what influence? This is a linear model that describes the process of communication as a one-way process, namely, the transmission of the message from the sender to the receiver and through the communication the receiver is influenced by the message. This model addresses the receiver as a passive factor. In contrast, the circular model of De Fleur (1968, in Kaspy & Limor, 1992) addresses the feedback from the sender, or in other words, it is not completely symmetrical. The sender serves still as a main source of messages and while the messages of the receiver are defined as feedback. The model of De Fleur, unlike the linear model that was accepted before it, takes into consideration different disorders in the processes of communication and calls them "noise". This model removes the responsibility from the sender of the message and conveys it, at least partially, to the receiver of the message.

Cary (2003) based his approach on the linear model and notes two approaches for understanding the place and the role of mass media in society. One approach sees communication to be a means for the transmission of messages, while the other approach

maintains that this is not transmission but communication. The media assembles around shared symbols and values and creates a feeling of a cooperative community. In addition, in his opinion, communication fulfills a role of the mapping of the reality and helps the person in the space of the culture. Carry (2003) holds that the receiver is not aware of the space of culture since he is not active in the translation of the communication messages and does not decode the contents but is passive.

Either way, we all see the power of communication in the shaping of the everyday reality and the influential role on the shaping of public opinion. Goren (1993) addresses the "formative approach", according to which there is no one objective truth but truth in the eyes of journalist covering it. According to Kaspy (2001), the media serve as a tool for the evaluation of knowledge and fill three roles: (1) agents of socialization that can build public opinion, (2) channels for the flow of opinions, and (3) reflectors of public opinion who teach about public opinion from all the opinions that are published. The means of mass media are involved in the building of the perceptions of the receivers about the reality. According to the approach of the building of reality, the receivers cannot know all that occurs in the world and therefore the means of media constitute for them a main source of information and shape their perception of the phenomena, events, social groups, norms, cultural codes, and so on (Grossberg, Wartella, & Whitney, 1998). Hence it can be concluded that the means of media have impact on the creation and duration of events in reality but there is no agreement about the degree of influence. McVale (2011) presents research studies that showed that the strength of the influences of the media is determined by the audience of recipients no less than the producer senders. He further holds that the media shape the public opinion and the nature of the actual reality and structure the picture of the world of people in their society.

According to Feuerstein (2016), as the communication technologies improve and their presence in the everyday life of the audience is steadily deepening, the issue of the influences of the media becomes more complex.

It is necessary to not ignore the fact that in the building of a shared world of associations the media may inculcate or strengthen distorted concepts, including

prejudices and stereotypes. The stereotype is a perception (generally negative) towards a social group through simplistic presentations of outside appearance or nature and beliefs. Stereotypes illustrate important approaches and power relations towards categories of people in a certain society at a given time. These categories include nation, race, sex, status, age, sexual preference, professions, and exceptional groups. The stereotypes are established over years of repetition in the media, as well as through assumptions in everyday conversation. Stereotypes are characterized in that it is possible to identify them immediately (Burton, 1990). The stereotypes have implications on the self-image (how the person perceives himself and his image in the eyes of others). The representation fixates stereotypes in the attribution to groups. The representation is an image, reflection, or reconstruction of something from the "real" world and addresses the way in which different aspects from the reality are built (people, objects, events, places, ideas) and how they are presented in the media. The representation in the media creates frequently a gap between reality and its representation. The representations are (1) selective, (2) limited or framed, (3) in one voice (namely, from one position), and (4) constitute a product of mechanical processing or mediation (McQueen, 1998).

4.2 Examination of the Teacher's Image and Representation in the Media in Israel

Examination of the teacher's representation in the media will facilitate the examination of the teacher's image. Some maintain that there are more similarities than differences between the media and education; both are based on the integration between an academic discipline and practice, both are academic disciplines, and both include all the poles of culture: norms and morality, knowledge and thinking, expression of emotions and technological and economic resources. Both fill social, cultural, emotional roles and serve as mediators for the broad public (Rosengren, 1985). In Israel there has barely been research on the place of the teacher's image and presentation in the media. Dr. Ornat Torin (2014) presents in her book one of the few research works on the topic in Israel, *Representations of Teachers in the Israeli Media*, but her research addresses the image of the teacher in the elementary and high school and not the teacher in early childhood education. Torin (2014) greatly addresses the image, including the image and stereotype

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of the teacher in the Israeli media. She studies the teacher's image in three media fields: cinema, communications, and the press in Israel and reached the conclusion that the teacher's image is mocked and negative and her image is deceiving. The public distrusts the difficulty in the teacher's work and her salary demands. The teachers' strike, for example, is perceived as a petty and political act. She indicates a change around the teachers' strike in 2007, where there was solidarity of parents and students with the teachers' requirements and addresses the gender nature of the profession, which is nearly entirely composed of women. She describes the teachers' image in television comedies, where the image reaches a peak of contempt and nurtures an image that becomes the reality of teachers in Israeli society. This is an image of hard and ignorant women who chose the profession since it was convenient. She even attributes the low level of salary to the fact that the entire profession exists in the shadow of the patriarchy and serves the traditional division of roles between the sexes at home. Moreover, she attributes the negative approach of the media towards the teachers to concealed interests and even a secret conspiracy of the heads of the universities. In her opinion, they are interested in discrediting the academic level of the colleges and thus emphasizing their advantage and this in her opinion is also a plot of the Ministry of Finance to maintain the salaries of teachers at a low level (Torin, 2014).

The image of the profession of the preschool teachers in the Israeli media is a topic that has not yet been researched. From the impression it can be understood that it is even lower than that of the teachers. The preschool teacher is generally presented only in negative articles and news, including when the headline says 'preschool teacher' but the institution is a daycare center and the workers the caregivers.

II. Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research objective and research questions. I will focus on the reasons for the suitability of the quantitative research paradigm to the present research study. I will review the target population and the research methods – I will present the research questionnaire.

1. Research Objective

The objective of the present research study is to know and to understand the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israel society and to present the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israel society from the viewpoint of the parents of the kindergarten children, the students of early childhood education at the start and the end of their studies and in a program for the re-training of academically educated people, and the kindergarten teachers themselves. This population was selected since the kindergarten teachers will reflect their perception from their actual experiences, while from the students it will be possible to learn about their choice and perception of the image at the start of their path when they do not yet know well enough the profession and at the later stages of the learning when they have gotten to know the kindergarten teachers and have experience in the kindergartens. The group of academically educated students undergoing re-training was chosen since they are generally older and have more life experience and have chosen this profession at this stage in life, and from them it will be possible to learn about the motives of the choice of the profession and about the image of the profession of the kindergarten teacher. The population of the parents constitutes a mirror of the activity in the kindergarten. Thus, the research study presents the opinion of Israeli society about the kindergarten teacher.

The review of the literature addresses the variety of the kindergarten teacher's roles, the multiplicity of the roles, and the complexity of the profession. In this research study, I draw conclusions about the participants' perception of the kindergarten teacher's different roles. I focus on the roles of the kindergarten teacher as a manager, the kindergarten teacher as an educator, the kindergarten teacher as a teacher, the

kindergarten teacher as a counselor, and the kindergarten teacher as a caregiver. I examine what is more dominant in the respondents' perception and what composes the image. I address three significant elements that characterize the role of the educator – knowledge, skills, and values – and how they are expressed in the different roles filled by the kindergarten teacher and what influences the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israeli society, in order to find ways to improve the image.

2. Research Questions

1. What is the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israel society and what affects it?

1.1 What is the image of a kindergarten teacher in Israel society?

    1.1.1 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher in the group of parents?

        1.1.1.1 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a manager in the group of parents?

        1.1.1.2 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as an educator and a leader in the group of parents?

        1.1.1.3 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a teacher in the group of parents?

        1.1.1.4 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a counselor in the group of parents?

        1.1.1.5 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a caregiver in the group of parents?

    1.1.2. What is the image of the kindergarten teacher in the group of kindergarten teachers?

        1.1.2.1 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a manager in the group of kindergarten teachers?

        1.1.2.2 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as an educator and a leader in the group of kindergarten teachers?

        1.1.2.3 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a teacher in the group of kindergarten teachers?

        1.1.2.4 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a counselor in the group of kindergarten teachers?

1.1.2.5 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a caregiver in the group of kindergarten teachers?

1.1.3 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students?

1.1.3.1 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a manager in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students?

1.1.3.2 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as an educator and a leader in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students?

1.1.3.3 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a teacher in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students?

1.1.3.4 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a counselor in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students?

1.1.3.5 What is the image of the kindergarten teacher as a caregiver in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students?

1.2 What are the differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image by the research groups?

1.2.1 What are the differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager by the research groups?

1.2.2 What are the differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator and a leader by the research groups?

1.2.3 What are the differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher by the research groups?

1.2.4 What are the differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor by the research groups?

1.2.5 What are the differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver by the research groups?

1.2.6 What is the difference between the groups in their rating of the kindergarten teacher's profession compared to other professions?

1.3 What affects the image of a kindergarten teacher in Israel society?

1.3.1 What are the differences in the kindergarten teacher's image by gender?

1.3.2 What are the differences in the kindergarten teacher's image by age?

1.3.3 What are the differences in the kindergarten teacher's image by religion?

1.3.4 What are the differences in the kindergarten teacher's image by economic situation?

1.3.5 What are the differences in the kindergarten teacher's image by education?

1.3.6 What are the differences in the kindergarten teacher's image by kindergarten teachers with different seniority?

1.3.7 What are the differences in the kindergarten teacher's image by kindergarten teachers working in areas with different socioeconomic status?

1.3.8 What are the differences in the image of a kindergarten teacher for parents who know the kindergarten teacher is personally?

1.3.9 What are the differences in the image of a kindergarten teacher in parents who have one to three children?

1.3.10 What is the difference in the image of a kindergarten teacher between student groups: first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students?

3. Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses are:

1. There are factors that differentiate the image of a kindergarten teacher in Israeli society.

   1.1. The image of the kindergarten teacher is perceived differently in relation to the various roles of the profession.

   1.2. The image of the kindergarten teacher differs according to the research groups: students, kindergarten teachers, parents.

1.3. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by age.

1.4. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by gender.

1.5. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by economic situation.

1.6. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by religion.

1.7. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by the level of religiosity.

1.8. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated by education.

1.9. The kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated in the group of kindergarten teachers according to the different seniority in their work.

1.10. The image of kindergarten teachers differs within the group of kindergarten teachers according to the socio-economic area in which the kindergarten is located.

1.11. The kindergarten teachers' image is differentiated for a parent who know kindergarten teachers personally, different from parents who have one child up to three.

1.12. The kindergarten teachers' image is differentiated within the student group: between first-year education students and third-year education students and academic training courses.

1.13. The kindergarten teacher's rating is differentiated by the various groups.

1.14. The motives for the selection of the profession will be differentiated by the various groups.

1.15. The motives for the selection of the profession will be differentiated within the student group: between first-year education students, and third-year education students and academic training courses.

4. Research Approach

This research study is performed in the quantitative method. In this research study I attempt to describe the reality and to provide a clearer picture of the differences in the kindergarten teacher's image between students in different stages of training, parents, and kindergarten teachers themselves. This research study attempts to reveal the existing perceptions of the image of the kindergarten teacher. I attempt to explain the relationship between the necessity and importance of the profession of the kindergarten teacher and

the professional image of the kindergarten teacher. The quantitative method was chosen since quantitative research is considered objective and assumes that human behavior is anticipated (Friedman, 2007). Quantitative analysis focuses on one or a number of factors that were researched in one unit of time. It focuses on the collection of numerical data and their inclusion in groups of people and thus provides an explanation of a certain phenomenon (Babbie, 2010). There is a theoretical basis for the many roles of the profession of the kindergarten teacher and the complexity of this position. In this research study I attempt to describe how the image of the educator is perceived by others and by himself and to identify the components of the public image and the factors that influence them.

Comte, the father of sociology, who lived in France in the first half of the 19ᵗʰ century, called the concept of general science in his time by the name "positivism". The focus of the positivist paradigm is the social structures and institutions that arrange and organize people's social behavior. Comte believed that it is possible to validate social behavior through ways of thinking and rationalism. Comte maintained that research instruments predict social processes. Moreover, he believed that through these tools it is possible to organize and build a better society, which is more effective and just, like through the understanding of the phenomenon of nature it is possible to improve the use of nature for the benefit of humanity. The positivist paradigm, from which quantitative research is derived, assumes that there is one scientific truth that can be measured using precise instruments and acts in a mechanism of the disassembly of the reality into parts, the phrasing of hypotheses about these parts, and then the confirmation or refutation of the hypotheses using experiments. From the collection of the hypotheses that are confirmed or disconfirmed a picture of the world is built, which steadily approaches the "one true description" of the world (Lyman & Vidich, 1998).

This paradigm can benefit this research study, in the deciphering of the kindergarten teacher's image and thus in the solutions for advancing it.

The researcher according the paradigm of positivism distances the phenomena and observes them objectively. The researcher aspires to see the phenomenon as it is and

not to distort it or the impression of it with the research intervention (Schlesky & Arieli, 2016). In this type of research, the scientist can provide an explanation of phenomena, or in other words, find relationships between phenomena and indicate the laws of behavior. Nature is open to the objective investigation of a person through science.

In this way, it is possible to explain and prove the research hypothesis: there are factors that influence the image of the kindergarten teacher in society, such as knowledge that the public has about the kindergarten teacher's role. For example, as the public has greater knowledge about the kindergarten teacher's role, the professional training required, and the complexity of the profession, the image created about the profession in public increases, while when there is greater ignorance about the profession the image is lower.

The research methodology developed in the positivist approach is hypothetical-deductive. This is based on early hypotheses about the possibility of the researched phenomenon or behavior. The hypotheses are derived deductively from theories and from previous researches. Thus, positivism is a certain scientific paradigm. In this way, it will be possible to conclude from the participants in the different groups about the question of what is the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israeli society. The paradigm represents an outlook that defines the individual's place in it and the range of possible relations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

5. Research Variables

5.1 Dependent Variables

1.1 The image of a kindergarten teacher in Israel society

1.1.1 The image of the kindergarten teacher in the group of parents .

    1.1.1.1 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a manager in the group of parents.

    1.1.1.2 The image of the kindergarten teacher as an educator and a leader in the group of parents

    1.1.1.3 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a teacher in the group of parents

1.1.1.4 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a counselor in the group of parents

1.1.1.5 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a caregiver in the group of parents

1.1.2 The image of the kindergarten teacher in the group of kindergarten teachers

1.1.2.1 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a manager in the group of kindergarten teachers

1.1.2.2 The image of the kindergarten teacher as an educator and a leader in the group of kindergarten teachers

1.1.2.3 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a teacher in the group of kindergarten teachers

1.1.2.4 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a counselor in the group of kindergarten teachers

1.1.2.5 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a caregiver in the group of kindergarten

1.1.3 The image of the kindergarten teacher in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students

1.1.3.1 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a manager in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students

1.1.3.2 The image of the kindergarten teacher as an educator and a leader in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students

1.1.3.3 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a teacher in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students

1.1.3.4 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a counselor in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students.

1.1.3.5 The image of the kindergarten teacher as a caregiver in the group of first year education students, last year education students, and academic training track students

5.2 Independent Variables

1.2 Factors that differentiate image of a kindergarten teacher in Israel society

    1.2.1 Gender

    1.2.2 Age

    1.2.3 Religion

    1.2.4 Economic situation

    1.2.5 Education

    1.2.6 Seniority

    1.2.7 Socioeconomic status

    1.2.8 Level of familiarity with the kindergarten teacher

    1.2.9 Number of children in the family

    1.2.10 Differences between student groups: academic year and academic track

6. Research Instrument

This research study used questionnaires, since to clarify the question of what is the perception of society of the kindergarten teacher and to understand the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israeli society, the best way is the questionnaire. This is an effective way to clarify perceptions and feelings of people about the kindergarten teacher's image. The questionnaire is anonymous, and therefore the likelihood of truthful responses is high, as is the possibility of reaching a range of respondents and a large number and thus of delineating a comprehensive picture. Questionnaires can collect data about a broad population in a short, orderly, and relatively methodical manner. All the data are found in the responses, and all that is left to do is to analyze the obtained data.

The questionnaire is composed of three parts. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of the review of the literature. In the review of the literature there is agreement that the social image is a product of social status and prestige.

The image of the profession comes from the public's evaluation of the skills of the profession and the professional components of the practitioner of the profession, as well as the comparison with other professionals, regarding the degree of influence of the

professional in society, the social recognition, and the financial salary as well as the attractiveness of the profession in general society (Ben Peretz, 2009; Bourdieu, 2005; Crompton, 1998; Dovrat Committee Report, 2005; Hoyle, 2001; Langton & Hall, 2006; Oplatka, 2009). The skills and components of the profession of the kindergarten teacher are expressed in many aspects of the kindergarten teacher's work, which are expressed in the review of the literature and are covered in an entire chapter (chapter 2) – manager, educator and educational leader, caregiver, counselor, teacher; managerial and organizational aspects – the kindergarten teacher as a manager, the teaching aspect – the kindergarten teacher as an educator who instills knowledge, the value-oriented aspect – the kindergarten teacher as leading education for values in the community, the counseling aspect – the system of relations with the parents, and the care aspect – early childhood requires care in facets of nutrition, hygiene, and safety.

The contemporary kindergarten teacher is supposed to be a figure with many different abilities and skills in different areas – personal, interpersonal, professional, managerial, and value-oriented (Ministry of Education, Department of Preschool Education, 2019).

The questionnaire includes questions about every role. Every role addresses three main aspects: knowledge, skills, and values. The questions address three different viewpoints of the researcher: in the researcher's eyes, in the media, and by society.

The answers are ranked on a Likert scale of six ranks. The scores (according to the Likert scale of six classes) range from 1 – very low, 2 – low, 3 – rather low, 4 – rather high, 5 – high, 6 – very high and were intended to reflect the components' ability to characterize the professional in Israeli society.

The second part of the questionnaire addresses the motives of the choice of the profession. It includes about ten questions also built (as in the previous part) on a Likert scale of six ranks. The last question in this part examines how much the parent wants their child to choose the profession of the kindergarten teacher.

The third part of the questionnaire addresses the ranking of the social status and the ranking of the prestige of the six professions in society. This part was taken from the research of Gilat and Wongrowitz (2018), shortened, and adjusted to this research. This part of the questionnaire was chosen for the purpose of comparison to other professions. The respondents were asked to rank the social status of six professions: the professions were chosen from the research of Gilat and Wongrowitz (2018) by a focus group and they are professions relevant to the comparison to the teaching profession. Five professions were chosen: medicine, law, and social work in which an academic degree is required, hi-tech worker, and career military person, characterized by the strong connection to Israeli society and they are socially recognized. I added the profession of the kindergarten teacher, which is the topic of my research, and I separated it from the profession of the teacher, so that it is possible to see the attitude towards the profession of the kindergarten teacher in comparison to the profession of the teacher. The reference in this part in the research study is only to the image of the professional in society relative to others.

The questionnaires underwent a validation process. The questionnaire was given to five senior early childhood experts who engage in the training of kindergarten teachers and in the instruction of kindergarten teachers, in order for them to express their attitudes and to indicate questions that are not relevant. The questionnaire was corrected according to their comments.

The questionnaire is anonymous. It was distributed to the parents, students, and kindergarten teachers on the Internet using GoogleForms via WhatsApp. All the respondents were informed ahead of time that the questionnaire is anonymous and is used solely for research purposes and that they can end their participation in the research at any time.

The questionnaire appears in the appendix.

7. Research Sample

The research sample included 197 participants: 65 parents of children in kindergarten (33%); 22 first year teaching students (11.2%); 28 last year teaching students (14.2%); 15 students in the academic training track (7.6%), and 67 actual kindergarten teachers (34%).

The majority of the general sample were 181 females (91.9%), Jewish (87.8%), secular (54.3%) or traditional (37.1%), with a bachelor education (56.9%), from a medium level of socioeconomic area of residence (68.5%).

III. Research Findings

1. Analysis of the Research Sample

The research sample included 197 participants: 65 parents of child in kindergarten (33%); 22 first year teaching students (11.2%); 28 last year teaching students (14.2%); 15 students in the academic training track (7.6%), and 67 actual kindergarten teachers (34%).

The majority of the general sample were 181 females (91.9%), Jewish (87.8%), secular (54.3%) or traditional (37.1%), with a bachelor education (56.9%), from a medium level of socioeconomic area of residence (68.5%).

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample by research group. The differences in the distribution of frequencies between research groups were examined by Chi square test.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sample by Research Group

Characteristic		Parents		Students		kindergarten teachers	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender	Female	51	78.5%	65	100%	65	97.0%
	Male	14	21.5%	-	-	2	3.0%
Age	Under 25	1	1.5%	21	32.2%	-	-
	25-29	4	6.2%	31	47.7%	6	9.0%
	30-39	38	58.5%	11	16.9%	13	19.4%
	40-49	19	29.2%	2	3.1%	30	44.8%
	50+	3	4.6%	-	-	18	26.9%
Education	Other	3	4.6%	3	4.6%	-	-
	High school	14	21.5%	16	24.6%	-	-
	Bachelor's	33	50.8%	46	70.8%	33	49.3%
	Master's	12	18.5%	-	-	34	50.7%
	PhD	3	4.6%	-	-	-	-
Religion	Jewish	61	93.8%	51	78.5%	61	91.0%
	Muslim	2	3.1%	4	6.2%	2	3.0%
	Christian	2	3.1%	4	6.2%	1	1.5%
	Druze	-		5	7.7%	3	4.5%
	Other	-		1	1.5%	-	-
Religiosity	Other	1	1.5%	2	3.1%	-	-
	Secular	36	55.4%	23	35.4%	48	71.6%
	Traditional	22	33.8%	34	52.3%	17	25.4%
	Religious	4	6.2%	6	9.2%	2	3.0%
	Orthodox	2	3.1%	-	-	-	-
Socio-economic status	Low	1	1.5%	1	1.5%	1	1.5%
	Medium	44	67.7%	54	83.1%	37	55.2%
	High	20	30.8%	10	15.4%	29	43.3%

There were significant differences in the distribution of gender between the research groups (χ^2 (2) = 23.79, p<.01). Among students, all of the participants were females, while among parents 21.5% were males. There were significant differences in the distribution of age between the research groups (χ^2 (8) = 143.45, p<.01). Among students, 32.3% of the participants were under 25 years, while among parents and kindergarten teachers higher rates of participants were in older age groups of 30-39 years (58.5% among parents) and 40-49 years (44.8% among kindergarten teachers).

There were significant differences in the distribution of education between the research groups (χ^2 (8) = 65.54, p<.01). Among students, 70.8% of the participants have a Bachelor's degree, while among kindergarten teachers half of the participants have a Master's degree (50.7%). Among parents, half of the participants have a Bachelor's degree (50.8%).

There were no significant differences in the distribution of religion between the research groups (χ^2 (8) = 10.93, p>.05). However, there were significant differences in the distribution of religiosity between the research groups (χ^2 (8) = 22.96, p<.01). Among kindergarten teachers (71.6%) and parents (55.4%), most of the sample of participants is secular. Among students, 52.3% of the participants were traditional.

There were significant differences in the distribution of socio-economic status between the research groups (χ^2 (4) = 12.34, p<.05). Among students, most of the participants define their socio-economic status as medium (83.1%), while among teachers (43.3%) and parents (30.8%) there are higher rates of high socio-economic status.

The sample of parents answered two more questions: "How many children do you have in kindergarten" and "Do you know a kindergarten teacher personally (among your good friends, family relative)"? Table 2 presents the distribution of answers.

Table 2: Characteristics of the Sample of Parents

Question		N	%
Number of children in kindergarten	1	42	64.6%
	2	16	24.6%
	3	4	6.2%
	3+	3	4.6%
Do you know a kindergarten teacher personally	No	27	41.5%
	Yes	38	58.5%

The sample of kindergarten teachers answered two more questions: their seniority and the socio-economic status of their kindergarten location.

Table 3 presents the distribution of the socio-economic status of the kindergarten by its location.

Table 3: Characteristics of the Socio-Economic Status of the Kindergarten

Question		N	%
The area where your kindergarten is located is in a socioeconomic state:	Low	12	17.9%
	Medium	30	44.8%
	High	25	37.3%

Chart 1 presents the distribution of kindergarten teachers' seniority.
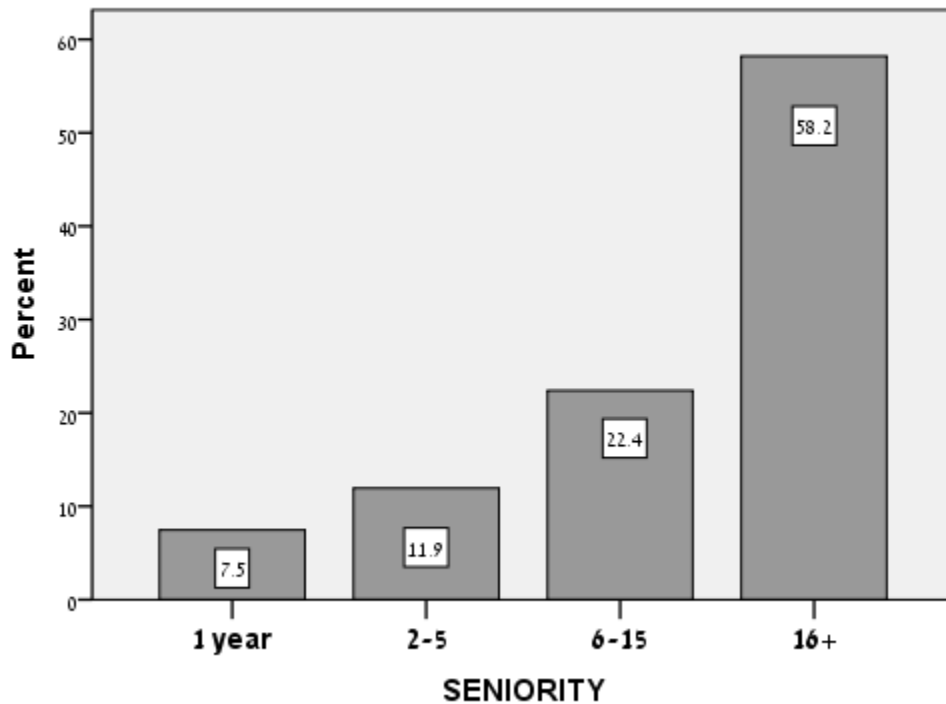
2. Analysis of the Research Questionnaire

The perceptions of teacher's image were examined in three domains: knowledge, skills, and values. The answers were on a Likert scale of 1-6: one is not at all, six is extremely. The measures of the questionnaire are listed below.

The kindergarten teacher's image as a manager

- *Knowledge:* Item 1
- *Skills:* Item 2
- *Values:* Item 3
- *Total scale of the image as a manager* was computed by the average of seven items in part one of the questionnaire. Cronbach Alpha was α=0.75.

The kindergarten teacher's image as an educator and leader

- *Knowledge:* Item 2

- *Skills:* Item 3
- *Values:* Item 4
- *Total scale of the image as an educator/leader* was computed by the average of seven items in part two of the questionnaire. Cronbach Alpha was α=0.73.

The kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher

- *Knowledge:* Items 2, 5, 10. The measure of teacher's image as a teacher in the domain of values was computed by the average of these items. Cronbach Alpha was α=0.72.
- *Skills:* Items 6, 8. the measure of teacher's image as a teacher in the domain of skills was computed by the average of these items. Cronbach Alpha was α=0.77.
- *Values:* Item 9.
- *Total scale of the image as a teacher* was computed by the average of ten items in part three of the questionnaire. Cronbach Alpha was α=0.80.

The kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor

- *Knowledge:* Item 3
- *Skills:* Items 4, 5. the measure of teacher's image as a counselor in the domain of skills was computed by the average of these items. Cronbach Alpha was α=0.76.
- *Values:* Item 7
- *Total scale of the image as a counselor* was computed by the average of seven items in part four of the questionnaire. Cronbach Alpha was α=0.72.

The kindergarten teacher's image as caregiver

- *Knowledge:* Item 3.
- *Total scale of the image as a caregiver* was computed by the average of five items in part five of the questionnaire. Cronbach Alpha was α=0.57.

3. Descriptive Statistics

To examine the overall attitudes of the sample toward the kindergarten teachers' image, the distribution of frequencies of all questionnaire items is presented in the tables below, for each section of the questionnaire. Table 4 presents the distribution of frequencies (percentage) for the items measuring the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager.

Table 4: Distribution of Frequencies of the Kindergarten Teacher's Image as a Manager (N=197)

Item	Not at all	Very Slightly	Slightly	Moderately	Very much	Extremely
The kindergarten teacher has management knowledge for kindergarten management	0.5%	6.6%	10.7%	35.0%	34.5%	12.7%
The kindergarten teacher is equipped with management skills	1.0%	4.6%	15.2%	37.1%	32.0%	10.2%
The kindergarten is managed according to clear and defined values.	0.5%	1.0%	4.6%	23.9%	50.8%	19.3%
The kindergarten teacher is featured in the media as an educational institution manager	20.8%	26.9%	22.3%	18.3%	7.6%	4.1%
The kindergarten teacher is seen in the society as the director of an educational institution	16.8%	26.4%	24.9%	15.2%	12.7%	4.1%
The kindergarten teacher is featured in the media as an educational leader and educator	15.2%	27.9%	26.4%	15.2%	11.7%	3.6%
The kindergarten teacher is a role model for behavior according to values	1.0%	2.5%	8.6%	9.1%	34.0%	44.7%

The statistics show that most of the participants agree (very much-extremely) that the kindergarten teacher is a role model for behavior according to values (78.7%). Additionally, most of the participants agree (very much-extremely) that the kindergarten is managed according to clear and defined values (70%). Most of the participants do not agree (not at all - slightly) that the kindergarten teacher is featured in the media as an educational institution manager/ as an educational leader and educator, or in society as the director of an educational institution (approximately 69%).

Most of the participants express medium-high agreement (moderately - very much) with the statements that the kindergarten teacher has management knowledge for kindergarten management, and is equipped with management skills (approximately 70%).

Table 5 presents the distribution of frequencies (percentage) for the items measuring the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator and leader.

Table 5: Distribution of Frequencies of the Kindergarten Teacher's Image as an Educator and Leader (N=197)

Item	Not at all	Very Slightly	Slightly	Moderately	Very much	Extremely
The kindergarten teacher is seen as an educator and educational leader in society	6.1%	19.8%	21.3%	26.4%	18.8%	7.6%
The kindergarten teacher knows a variety of educational methods and uses them wisely	0.5%	0.5%	4.6%	26.9%	53.8%	13.7%
The kindergarten teacher has the skill required for educating children	-	-	1.5%	19.3%	55.3%	23.9%
The kindergarten teacher influences the values of the kindergarten child and his family, such as environmental education	0.5%	1.5%	2.5%	19.3%	48.7%	27.4%
Society recognizes the importance of the kindergarten teacher's role, as an educator and educational leader at a critical age in shaping children's education	8.1%	17.3%	19.3%	25.9%	22.8%	6.6%
The people around me trust the kindergarten teacher and the way she/he chooses to educate the children in the kindergarten.	-	3.0%	9.6%	36.0%	41.1%	10.2%
The impact of kindergarten education is evident in the children's homes and community in the area where I live.	-	-	7.1%	35.5%	42.6%	14.7%

The statistics show that the majority of the participants agree (very much-extremely) that the kindergarten teacher has the skill required for educating children (79%), and that the kindergarten teacher influences the values of the kindergarten child and his family, such as environmental education (76%), and that the kindergarten teacher knows a variety of educational methods and uses them wisely (67.5%).

Most of the participants express medium-high agreement (moderately - very much) with the statements that the people around trust the kindergarten teacher and the way she/he chooses to educate the children in the kindergarten (77%) and that the impact of kindergarten education is evident in the children's homes and community in the area where I live (78%).

It appears that there are differences of opinion in regard to the statement that the kindergarten teacher is seen as an educator and educational leader in society: approximately 40% of the participants very slightly- slightly agree, and approximately 45% of the participants moderately - very much agree. Additionally, there are differences of opinion in regard to the statement that the society recognizes the importance of the kindergarten teacher's role, as an educator and educational leader at a critical age in shaping children's education: approximately 36% of the participants very slightly- slightly agree, and approximately 49% of the participants moderately - very much agree.

Table 6 presents the distribution of frequencies (percentage) for the items measuring the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher.

Table 6: Distribution of Frequencies of the Kindergarten Teacher's Image as a Teacher (N=197)

Item	Not at all	Very Slightly	Slightly	Moderately	Very much	Extremely
The kindergarten teacher is shown in the media as equivalent to an elementary or high school teacher	21.8%	22.3%	28.9%	18.3%	6.6%	2.0%
The kindergarten teacher builds a customized curriculum for kindergarten; which its' content is relevant and meaningful.	0.5%	1.5%	3.6%	17.8%	54.8%	21.8%
The kindergarten teacher is seen in the society as imparting knowledge and teaching like an elementary or high school teacher	12.7%	12.7%	23.4%	29.4%	15.2%	6.6%
The role of the kindergarten teacher in learning is significant and forms the basis of knowledge for the learner in all areas of knowledge	0.5%	2.0%	4.1%	10.7%	44.7%	38.1%
The kindergarten teacher has extensive knowledge in the various areas of knowledge	0.5%	2.0%	8.1%	37.1%	43.7%	8.6%
The kindergarten teacher is equipped with innovative technological skills tailored to early childhood and uses them as a tool for up-to-date learning	3.6%	6.6%	23.9%	35.5%	25.4%	5.1%
In order for the kindergarten teacher to learn up-to-date and relevant knowledge, he/she is constantly learning.	-	1.5%	6.6%	23.9%	47.2%	20.8%
The kindergarten teacher promotes 21st century skills in children like computer skills, research, and so on.	1.5%	8.6%	15.7%	34.5%	32.0%	7.6%
The kindergarten teacher combines value learning in every subject and study activity in the kindergarten	-	0.5%	4.6%	16.2%	53.8%	24.9%
The kindergarten teacher knows a variety of educational methods tailored to early childhood	-	1.0%	2.5%	24.9%	55.8%	15.7%

The statistics show that the majority of the participants agree (very much-extremely) with the statements that:

- The kindergarten teacher builds a customized curriculum for kindergarten; which its' content is relevant and meaningful (76.6%)
- The role of the kindergarten teacher in learning is significant and forms the basis of knowledge for the learner in all areas of knowledge (82.8%)

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- In order for the kindergarten teacher to learn up-to-date and relevant knowledge, he/she is constantly learning (68%)

- The kindergarten teacher incorporates value learning in every subject and study activity in the kindergarten (78.7%)

- The kindergarten teacher knows a variety of educational methods tailored to early childhood (71.5%)

Most of the participants do not agree (not at all - slightly) that the kindergarten teacher is shown in the media as equivalent to an elementary or high school teacher (73%).

Most of the participants express medium-high agreement (moderately - very much) with the statements that the kindergarten teacher has extensive knowledge in the various areas of knowledge (80%), that the kindergarten teacher is equipped with innovative technological skills tailored to early childhood and uses them as a tool for up-to-date learning (61%), and that the kindergarten teacher promotes 21st century skills in children like computer skills, research, and so on (66.5%).

It appears that there are differences of opinion in regard to the statement that the kindergarten teacher is seen in the society as imparting knowledge and teaching like an elementary or high school teacher: approximately 48% of the participants do not agree-slightly agree, and approximately 44% of the participants moderately - very much agree.

Table 7 presents the distribution of frequencies (percentage) for the items measuring the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor.

Table 7: Distribution of Frequencies of the Kindergarten Teacher's Image as a Counselor (N=197)

Item	Not at all	Very Slightly	Slightly	Moderately	Very much	Extremely
The kindergarten teacher is valued in the society as having the ability to advise parents on how to deal with the difficulties and dilemmas related to children (kindergarten and home).	2.5%	4.1%	15.2%	32.5%	37.6%	8.1%
The media presents the kindergarten teacher as a professional figure, who advises parents and helps solve difficulties with children at home and kindergarten.	17.3%	23.4%	24.4%	20.3%	13.2%	1.5%
The kindergarten teacher is knowledgeable in educational counseling	0.5%	3.6%	7.1%	31.0%	50.8%	7.1%
The kindergarten teacher has counseling and mediation skills with children	1.0%	1.5%	3.0%	23.9%	50.3%	20.3%
The kindergarten teacher has counseling and mediation skills with parents	1.0%	4.6%	7.6%	39.6%	38.1%	9.1%
The kindergarten teacher maintains transparency and discretion in her/his work with parents	-	2.0%	4.1%	20.3%	45.2%	28.4%
The kindergarten teacher gives equal and respectful treatment to parents and children	-	1.0%	-	17.3%	51.3%	30.5%

The statistics show that the majority of the participants agree (very much-extremely) with the statements that:

- The kindergarten teacher gives equal and respectful treatment to parents and children (81.8%).
- The kindergarten teacher maintains transparency and discretion in his/her work with parents (73.6%).
- The kindergarten teacher has counseling and mediation skills with children (70.6%).

Most of the participants express medium-high agreement (moderately - very much) with the statements that the kindergarten teacher has counseling and mediation skills with parents (77.7%) and that the kindergarten teacher is knowledgeable in educational counseling (81.8%). Additionally, the participants express medium-high

agreement (moderately - very much) with the statement that the kindergarten teacher is valued in the society as having the ability to advise parents on how to deal with the difficulties and dilemmas related to children (kindergarten and home) (70%).

Most of the participants tend to disagree (not at all - slightly) that the media presents the kindergarten teacher as a professional figure, who advises parents and helps solve difficulties with children at home and kindergarten (65%).

Table 8 presents the distribution of frequencies (percentage) for the items measuring the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver.

Table 8: Distribution of Frequencies of the Kindergarten Teacher's Image as Caregiver (N=197)

Item	Not at all	Very Slightly	Slightly	Moderately	Very much	Extremely
Proper nutrition and child hygiene in the kindergarten are the responsibility of the kindergarten teacher	-	-	3.6%	11.7%	49.7%	35.0%
Kindergarten nutrition and hygiene are the primary role of the kindergarten teacher	2.5%	4.6%	15.7%	33.0%	32.5%	11.7%
The kindergarten teacher has a professional knowledge of safety, hygiene and early childhood nutrition	-	0.5%	4.6%	25.9%	51.8%	17.3%
There is a clear distinction in society between a kindergarten teacher, a caregiver, and an assistant.	13.7%	15.2%	15.2%	24.9%	22.3%	8.6%
There is a clear distinction in the media between kindergarten teacher, a caregiver, and an assistant.	23.9%	20.8%	15.7%	17.8%	14.7%	7.1%

The statistics show that the majority of the participants agree (very much-extremely) with the statements that proper nutrition and child hygiene in the kindergarten are the responsibility of the kindergarten teacher (84.7%) and that he/she has a professional knowledge of safety, hygiene, and early childhood nutrition (69%).

Most of the participants express medium-high agreement (moderately - very much) with the statements that kindergarten nutrition and hygiene are the primary role of the kindergarten teacher (65.5%).

Most of the participants tend to disagree (not at all - slightly) that there is a clear distinction in the media between a kindergarten teacher, a caregiver, and an assistant (60%).

It appears that there are differences of opinion in regard to the statement that there is a clear distinction in society between a kindergarten teacher, a caregiver, and an assistant: approximately 60% of the participants do not agree- slightly agree, and approximately 40% of the participants moderately - extremely agree.

Table 9 presents the distribution of frequencies (percentage) for the items measuring the motives for choosing the profession of a kindergarten teacher

Table 9: Distribution of Frequencies of the Motives for Choosing the Profession of a
Kindergarten Teacher (N=197)

Item	Not at all	Very Slightly	Slightly	Moderately	Very much	Extremely
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the salary	40.1%	13.7%	25.4%	12.7%	7.1%	1.0%
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the working conditions	8.1%	9.1%	13.2%	26.9%	30.5%	12.2%
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of job security	8.1%	7.6%	16.2%	29.4%	29.9%	8.6%
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the passion and love for the profession and the desire to influence	-	0.5%	4.1%	19.3%	41.1%	35.0%
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the low requirements of admission to academic studies	13.2%	9.6%	21.8%	21.8%	24.9%	8.6%
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of its multiple vacations and suitability of the schedule for working mothers	5.1%	3.0%	8.1%	24.4%	29.9%	29.4%
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of challenge and interest	0.5%	3.0%	10.7%	29.4%	36.5%	19.8%
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the desire to contribute to society	-	4.6%	12.2%	29.4%	34.0%	19.8%
The choice of profession is due to the great autonomy the kindergarten teacher has in managing the kindergarten	2.5%	6.1%	20.3%	32.5%	27.9%	10.7%
I would like my children to choose the profession of a kindergarten teacher	26.4%	10.7%	10.7%	26.9%	18.3%	7.1%

The statistics show that the majority of the participants agree (very much-extremely) with the statements that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the passion and love for the profession and the desire to influence (76%) and that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of its vacations and suitability of the schedule for working mothers (59%).

Most of the participants express medium-high agreement (moderately - very much) with the statements that:

- The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the working conditions (57%).
- The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of job security (59%).
- The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of challenge and interest (66%).
- The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the desire to contribute to society (63%).
- The choice of profession is due to the great autonomy the kindergarten teacher has in managing the kindergarten (60%).

Most of the participants tend to disagree (not at all - slightly) that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the salary (79%).

It appears that there are differences of opinion in regard to the statements that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the low requirements of admission to academic studies: approximately 45% of the participants do not agree-slightly agree, and approximately 55% of the participants moderately - extremely agree. In addition, that they would like their children to choose the profession of a kindergarten teacher: approximately 48% of the participants do not agree-slightly agree, and approximately 52% of the participants moderately - extremely agree.

In the last section of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to rank six professions by their social status and social prestige (1- lowest, 6-highest). Table presents the results.

Table 10: Distribution of Means of the Rank of Six Professions by Social Status/Prestige (N=197)

Professions	M	SD
Doctor	5.30	1.06
Lawyer	4.78	1.11
High tech engineer	4.01	1.11
Career military person	2.96	0.93
Elementary /high school teacher	2.24	0.96
Kindergarten teacher	1.71	1.37

The results indicate that the profession that was ranked highest by its social status and social prestige was doctor, and then lawyer, high tech engineer, career military person, elementary /high school teacher. The profession that was ranked lowest by its social status and social prestige was kindergarten teacher.

These results are illustrated in chart 2 below.

Chart 2: Distribution of the Rank of Six Professions by Social Status/Prestige
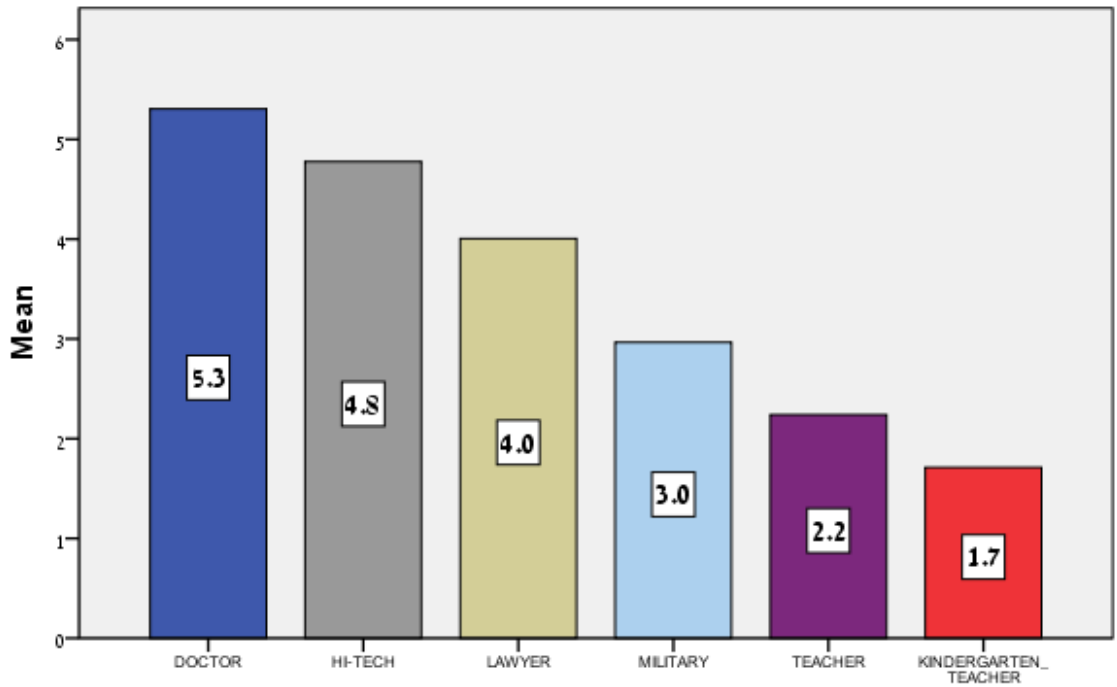
The differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image by research groups

The differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image between parents, students and kindergarten teachers were examined by a one way ANOVA. Table 11 presents the results.

Table 11: The Differences in Kindergarten Teacher's Image by Research Groups, on a Scale of 1-6 (N=197)

Image measures	Parents N=65		Students N=65		Kindergarten teachers N=67		F (2, 196)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Manager - knowledge	4.28	0.94	4.58	1.13	4.18	1.11	2.58
Manager - skills	4.22	0.97	4.49	0.85	4.04	1.23	**3.13***
Manager - values	4.78	0.89	4.88	0.76	4.78	0.95	0.26
Image as a manager	3.89	0.78	4.02	0.79	3.69	0.67	**3.26***
Educator - knowledge	4.55	0.88	4.66	0.73	5.00	0.73	**5.77****
Educator - skills	4.92	0.73	4.89	0.71	5.22	0.62	**4.66***
Educator - values	5.03	0.88	4.83	0.87	5.03	0.90	1.09
Image as an educator/leader	4.40	0.66	4.40	0.65	4.45	0.57	0.11
Teacher - knowledge	4.52	0.74	4.72	0.53	4.95	0.65	**7.16****
Teacher - skills	3.62	1.06	3.98	0.87	4.34	0.97	**8.96****
Teacher – values	5.02	0.83	4.78	0.78	5.13	0.75	**3.31***
Image as a teacher	4.12	0.70	4.34	0.56	4.48	0.54	**5.72****
Counselor - knowledge	4.45	0.83	4.43	0.91	4.60	0.95	0.68
Counselor - skills	4.44	0.85	4.53	0.88	4.78	0.79	2.81
Counselor – values	4.91	0.76	5.05	0.71	5.34	0.70	**6.15****
Image as a counselor	4.33	0.59	4.34	0.65	4.55	0.57	2.66
Caregiver - knowledge	4.77	0.70	4.63	0.89	5.01	0.72	**4.12***
Image as a caregiver	4.28	0.82	4.20	0.77	3.95	0.57	**3.58***

$p<.01$**, $p<.05$*

The results show that there were significant differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager in the skills domain ($F_{(2, 196)} = 3.13$, $p<.05$). A subsequent Scheffe test was performed in order to determine the source of these differences. The results indicate that student' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager in the skills domain are higher in comparison to kindergarten teachers. It is important to mention that the differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager in the knowledge domain were on the border of statistical significance ($F_{(2, 196)} = 2.58$, $p=0.07$). The results indicate on a trend that student' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager in the knowledge domain are higher in comparison to kindergarten teachers. Additionally, there were significant differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager in total ($F_{(2, 196)} = 3.26$, $p<.05$). Student' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager are higher in comparison to kindergarten teachers.

There were significant differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator/leader in the knowledge domain ($_{(2, 196)} = 5.77$, $p<.01$), and the skills domain ($F_{(2, 196)} = 4.66$, $p<.01$). The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that kindergarten teachers' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator/leader in the knowledge domain is higher in comparison to parents. Additionally, kindergarten teachers' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator/leader in the skills domain are higher in comparison to parents and students. There were no significant differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator/leader in total.

There were significant differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in the knowledge domain ($_{(2, 196)} = 7.16$, $p<.01$) and the skills domain ($F_{(2, 196)} = 8.96$, $p<.01$), and the values domain ($F_{(2, 196)} = 3.31$, $p<.05$). The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that kindergarten teachers' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in the knowledge and skills domains are higher in comparison to parents. Kindergarten teachers' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in the values domain are higher in comparison

to students. Additionally, there were significant differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in total (F (2, 196) = 5.72, p<.01). Kindergarten teachers' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher are higher in comparison to parents.

The results show that there were significant differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor in the values domain (F (2, 196) = 6.15, p<.01). The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that kindergarten teachers' perceptions of their image as a counselor in the values domain is higher in comparison to parents. It is important to mention that the differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor in the skills domain were on the border of statistical significance (F (2, 196) = 2.18, p=0.06). The results indicate on a trend that kindergarten teacher' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor in the skills domain are higher in comparison to parents. The differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor in total were on the border of statistical significance (F (2, 196) = 2.66, p=0.07). There is a trend that the kindergarten teachers' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor in total are higher in comparison to parents and students.

There were significant differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver in the knowledge domain (2, 196) = 4.12, p<.05). The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that kindergarten teachers' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver in the knowledge domain are higher in comparison to students. Additionally, there were significant differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver in total (F (2, 196) = 3.58, p<.05). Parents' perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver are higher in comparison to kindergarten teachers.

Kindergarten teachers' image among research groups

To examine the differences in the general image of kindergarten teachers between parents, students and kindergarten teachers a repeated measures ANOVA was performed.

The results show that there were significant differences between research groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image in general (F (8, 776) = 8.34, p<.01). The results are illustrated in chart 3 (means and SD were presented in table 11 above).

The results indicate that among parents, the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator/leader is ranked higher, then the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor, then as a caregiver, then as a teacher and last, as a manager.

Among students, the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator/leader is ranked higher, then the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher and counselor, then as a caregiver and last, as a manager.

Among kindergarten teachers, the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor is ranked higher, then the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher, then as an educator/leader, then as a caregiver and last, as a manager.

Chart 3: Differences in the Image of Kindergarten Teachers between Research
Groups
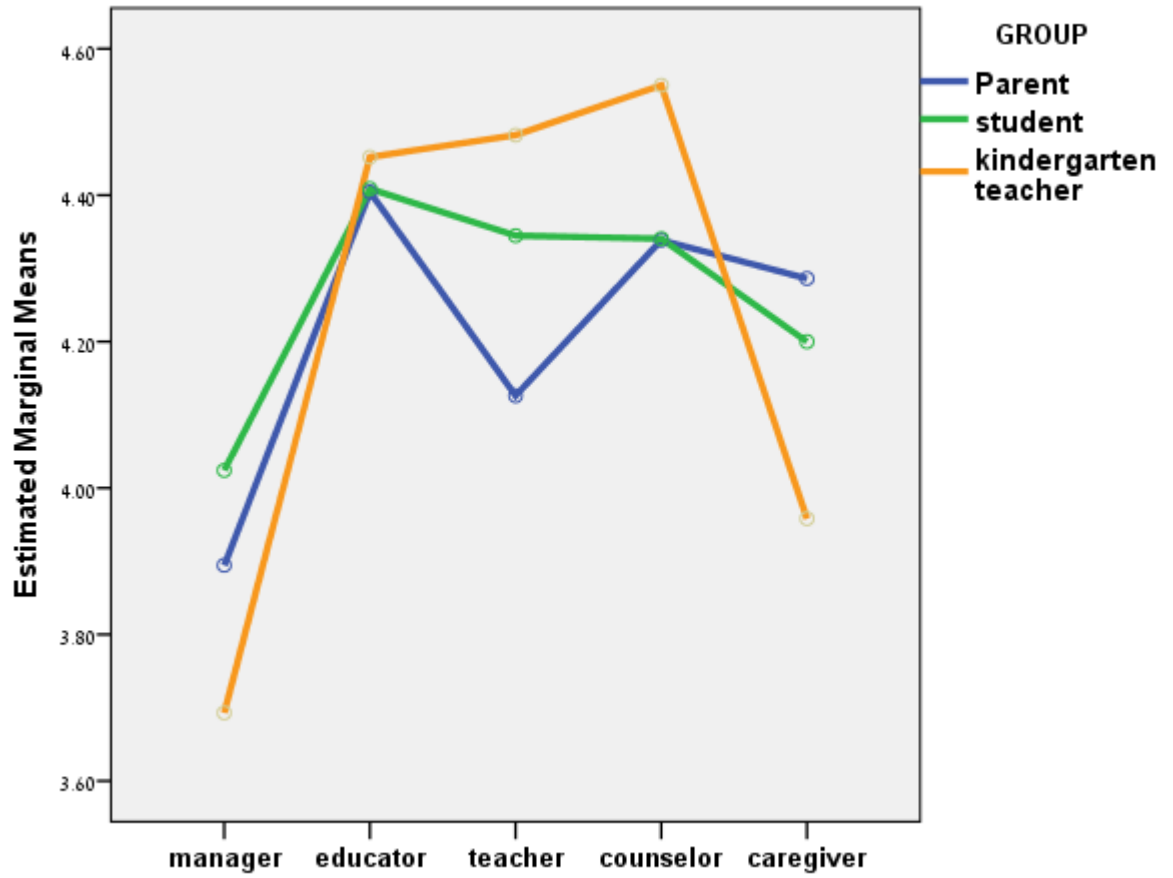
Differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image among students

The differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image between students in the first year, students in the last year and students in academic training were examined by a one way ANOVA. Table 12 presents the results.

Table 12: The Differences in Kindergarten Teacher's Image among Students, on a Scale of 1-6 (N=65)

| Image measures	First year N=22		Last year N=28		Academic training N=15		F (2, 64)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Manager - knowledge	4.59	1.53	4.43	0.87	4.87	0.83	0.72
Manager - skills	4.59	1.00	4.36	0.82	4.60	0.63	0.61
Manager - values	4.95	0.57	4.75	0.79	5.00	0.92	0.69
Image as a manager	4.25	0.82	3.81	0.74	4.07	0.76	2.09
Educator - knowledge	4.68	0.71	4.68	0.81	4.60	0.63	0.06
Educator - skills	5.00	0.75	4.89	0.68	4.73	0.70	0.62
Educator - values	4.77	0.75	4.79	0.95	5.00	0.92	0.35
Image as an educator/leader	4.61	0.60	4.28	0.73	4.35	0.49	1.68
Teacher - knowledge	4.71	0.62	4.77	0.50	4.64	0.46	0.28
Teacher - skills	4.06	0.97	3.92	0.80	3.96	0.91	0.15
Teacher - values	4.95	0.78	4.79	0.78	4.53	0.74	1.31
Image as a teacher	4.41	0.70	4.33	0.46	4.25	0.52	0.37
Counselor - knowledge	4.59	0.90	4.21	1.03	4.60	0.63	1.38
Counselor - skills	4.70	0.88	4.37	0.94	4.60	0.76	0.89
Counselor - values	5.09	0.75	5.11	0.62	4.87	0.83	0.60
Image as a counselor	4.50	0.59	4.26	0.70	4.24	0.63	1.08
Caregiver - knowledge	4.68	0.99	4.57	0.95	4.67	0.61	0.10
Image as a caregiver	4.40	0.76	4.01	0.77	4.25	0.73	1.62

The results show that there were no significant differences between the student groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image in all of the categories.

Additionally, the differences in the general image of kindergarten teachers between students were examined by a repeated measures ANOVA. The results showed that there were no significant differences between the student groups in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image in general (F (8, 248) = 0.86, p>.05).

The differences in the perceptions of the motives for choosing the profession of a kindergarten teacher by research groups

The differences in the perceptions of the motives for choosing the profession of a kindergarten teacher between parents, students and kindergarten teachers were examined by a one way ANOVA. Table 13 presents the results.

The Differences in the Motives for Choosing the Profession of a Kindergarten
Teacher by Research Groups, on a Scale of 1-6 (N=197)

	Parents N=65		Students N=65		kindergarten teachers N=67		F (2, 196)
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the salary	2.74	1.33	2.40	1.50	1.96	1.10	**5.80****
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the working conditions	4.29	1.50	3.88	1.44	3.81	1.29	2.25
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of job security	4.29	1.34	3.85	1.30	3.61	1.35	**4.40***
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the passion and love for the profession and the desire to influence	4.71	0.93	5.26	0.79	5.21	0.76	**8.75****
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the low requirements of admission to academic studies	4.18	1.24	3.38	1.59	3.28	1.48	**7.56****
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of its many vacations and suitability of the schedule for working mothers	5.12	1.06	4.46	1.34	4.21	1.42	**8.81****
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of challenge and interest	4.23	0.91	4.75	1.03	4.75	1.11	**5.57****
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the desire to contribute to society	4.11	1.01	4.78	1.13	4.67	0.97	**7.84****
The choice of profession is due to the great autonomy the kindergarten teacher has in managing the kindergarten	3.92	1.15	4.08	1.13	4.27	1.22	1.44
I would like my children to choose the profession of a kindergarten teacher	2.71	1.50	3.65	1.57	3.28	1.78	**5.49****

p<.01**, p<.05*

The results show that there were significant differences between research groups in the attitudes that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the salary (F (2, 196) = 5.80, p<.01) and job security (F (2, 196) = 4.40, p<.05). A subsequent Scheffe test was performed in order to determine the source of these differences. The results indicate that parents express higher agreement with these statements in comparison to kindergarten teachers.

There were significant differences between research groups in the attitude that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the passion and love for the profession and the desire to influence $(F (2, 196) = 8.75, p<.01)$. The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that parents express lower agreement with this statement in comparison to kindergarten teachers and students.

There were significant differences between research groups in the attitudes that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the low requirements of admission to academic studies $(F (2, 196) = 7.56, p<.01)$ and that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of its many vacations and suitability of the schedule for working mothers $(F (2, 196) = 8.81, p<.01)$. The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that parents express higher agreement with these statements in comparison to kindergarten teachers and students.

There were significant differences between research groups in the attitudes that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of challenge and interest $(F (2, 196) = 5.57, p<.01)$ and that the kindergarten chose the profession because of the because of the desire to contribute to society $(F (2, 196) = 7.84, p<.01)$. The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that parents express lower agreement with these statements in comparison to kindergarten teachers and students.

There were significant differences between research groups in the attitude that they would like their children to choose the profession of a kindergarten teacher $(F (2, 196) = 5.49, p<.01)$. The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that students express higher agreement with this statement in comparison to parents.

Next, the examination of the differences between groups in the rank of the six professions by their social status and social prestige (1- lowest, 6-highest) was performed. The table below presents the results.

Table 14: The Differences in the Rank of Six Professions by Research Groups (N=197)

Profession	Parents N=65		Students N=65		Kindergarten teachers N=67		F (2, 196)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Doctor	5.49	0.86	5.22	1.13	5.21	1.16	1.50
High tech engineer	5.03	0.82	4.66	1.25	4.64	1.17	2.58
Lawyer	3.65	1.06	4.23	1.12	4.13	1.08	**5.34****
Career military	2.89	0.95	2.97	0.95	3.03	0.92	0.35
Elementary /high school teacher	2.25	1.09	2.25	0.86	2.22	0.93	0.01
Kindergarten teacher	1.69	1.17	1.68	1.34	1.76	1.57	0.07

p<.01**

There were significant differences between research groups in the ranking of the profession of the lawyer (F (2, 196) = 5.34, p<.01). Parents ranked the profession of the lawyer higher in social status and prestige in comparison to kindergarten teachers and students.

However, in regard to all other professions there were no significant differences between research groups in the ranking of their social status and prestige. Repeated measures ANOVA show that there were no significant differences between research groups in the ranking of the six professions in general (F (10, 970) = 1.61, p>.05). The meaning is that parents, kindergarten teachers, and students ranked the six professions by their social status and social prestige in the same order: the highest rank for doctors and the lowest rank for kindergarten teachers.

Differences in the perceptions of the motives for choosing the profession of a kindergarten teacher among students

The differences in the perceptions of the motives for choosing the profession of a kindergarten teacher between students in the first year, students in the last year, and students in academic training were examined by a one way ANOVA. Table 15 presents the results.

Table 15: The Differences in the Motives for Choosing the Profession of a Kindergarten Teacher among Students, on a Scale of 1-6 (N=65)

	First year N=22		Last year N=28		Academic training N=15		F (2, 64)
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the salary	2.82	1.43	2.50	1.66	1.60	0.98	**3.22***
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the working conditions	3.73	1.48	4.21	1.31	3.47	1.55	1.51
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of job security	3.64	1.21	4.04	1.37	3.80	1.32	0.58
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the passion and love for the profession and the desire to influence	5.23	0.86	5.21	0.73	5.40	0.82	0.29
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the low requirements of admission to academic studies	3.36	1.39	4.00	1.54	2.27	1.43	**6.79****
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of its many vacations and suitability of the schedule for working mothers	3.95	1.39	5.04	0.96	4.13	1.55	**5.13****
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of challenge and interest	5.05	0.84	4.29	1.01	5.20	1.01	**5.97****
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the desire to contribute to society	5.14	0.83	4.50	1.10	4.80	1.47	1.98
The choice of profession is due to the great autonomy the kindergarten teacher has in managing the kindergarten	4.32	0.94	3.79	1.10	4.27	1.38	1.65
I would like my children to choose the profession of a kindergarten teacher	4.32	1.28	3.36	1.44	3.20	1.93	**3.29***

p<.01*, *p<.05**

There were significant differences between the student groups in the attitude that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the salary (F (2, 64) = 3.22, p<.05). The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that students in the first year express higher agreement with this statement in comparison to students in academic training.

There were significant differences between the student groups in the attitude that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the low requirements of

admission to academic studies $(F (2, 64) = 6.79, p<.01)$. The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that students in the last year express higher agreement with this statement in comparison to students in academic training.

There were significant differences between the student groups in the attitude that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of its many vacations and suitability of the schedule for working mothers $(F (2, 64) = 5.13, p<.01)$. The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that students in the last year express higher agreement with this statement in comparison to students in the first year.

There were significant differences between the student groups in the attitude that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of challenge and interest $(F (2, 64) = 5.97, p<.01)$. The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that students in the last year express lower agreement with this statement in comparison to students in the first year and students in academic training.

There were significant differences between the student group in the attitude that they would like their children to choose the profession of a kindergarten teacher $(F (2, 64) = 3.29, p<.05)$. The subsequent Scheffe test indicates that students in the first year express higher agreement with this statement in comparison to students in the last year and students in academic training.

Next, the examination of the differences between the student groups in the rank of the six professions by their social status and social prestige (1- lowest, 6-highest) was performed. Table 16 presents the results.

Table 16: The Differences in the Rank of Six Professions by Student Groups (N=197)

Profession	First year N=22		Last year N=28		Academic training N=15		F (2, 64)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Doctor	5.05	1.46	5.14	1.04	5.60	0.63	1.16
High tech engineer	4.55	1.05	4.71	1.51	4.73	1.03	0.14
Lawyer	4.27	1.35	4.14	1.00	4.33	1.04	0.15
Career military person	2.86	1.08	3.14	1.04	2.80	0.41	0.83
Elementary /high school teacher	2.23	0.75	2.32	1.02	2.13	0.74	0.23
Kindergarten teacher	2.05	1.70	1.54	1.13	1.40	1.05	1.30

There were no significant differences between the student groups in the ranking of the six professions.

Additionally, in regard to all other professions there were no significant differences between the student groups in the ranking of their social status and prestige. Repeated measures ANOVA show that there were no significant differences between the student groups in the ranking of the six professions in general (F (2, 62) = 1.12, p>.05). The meaning is that all of the students ranked the six professions by their social status and social prestige in the same order: the highest rank for doctors and the lowest rank for kindergarten teachers.

The differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image by socio-demographic characteristics

Gender

The differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image by gender were examined by an independent sample t-test. Table 17 presents the results.

Image measures	Female N=181		Male N=16		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Manager - knowledge	4.35	1.09	4.31	0.79	0.12
Manager - skills	4.27	1.04	4.06	1.06	0.74
Manager - values	4.82	0.86	4.69	0.94	0.59
Image as a manager	3.88	0.77	3.63	0.54	1.29
Educator - knowledge	4.76	0.81	4.56	0.72	0.92
Educator - skills	5.03	0.71	4.88	0.61	0.83
Educator - values	4.97	0.90	4.88	0.61	0.41
Image as an educator/leader	4.44	0.63	4.18	0.52	1.56
Teacher - knowledge	4.77	0.65	4.27	0.70	**2.94****
Teacher - skills	4.06	0.96	3.09	1.15	**3.79****
Teacher - values	5.01	0.78	4.63	0.88	1.85
Image as a teacher	4.36	0.59	3.80	0.71	**3.58****
Counselor - knowledge	4.51	0.90	4.25	0.85	1.12
Counselor - skills	4.64	0.83	3.93	0.79	**3.27****
Counselor - values	5.12	0.75	4.94	0.68	0.91
Image as a counselor	4.44	0.60	4.01	0.58	**2.72****
Caregiver - knowledge	4.82	0.79	4.69	0.70	0.63
Image as a caregiver	4.14	0.73	4.11	0.85	0.19

p<.01**, p<.05*

There were significant differences by gender in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in the knowledge domain (t (195) = 2.94, p<.01), and in the skills domain (t (195) = 3.79, p<.01), and in the general kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher (t (195) = 3.58, p<.01). The perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher are more positive among women in comparison to men. In addition, the differences in the values domain were close to statistical significance

(p=0.06), indicating on a trend of more positive perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in the values domain among women.

There were significant differences by gender in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor in the skills domain (t (195) = 3.27, p<.01), and in the general kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor (t (195) = 2.72, p<.01). The perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor are more positive among women in comparison to men.

There were no significant differences by gender in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image in all other categories.

Religion

The differences in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image by religion were examined by an independent sample t-test. It is important to mention that due to the small sample of non-Jewish participants, all other religions were united into one group. Table 18 presents the results.

Image measures	Jewish N=173		Other N=24		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Manager – knowledge	4.30	1.07	4.67	1.04	-1.59
Manager – skills	4.21	1.05	4.54	0.93	-1.46
Manager – values	4.79	0.89	5.00	0.65	-1.31
Image as a manager	3.81	0.73	4.26	0.85	**-2.75**
Educator – knowledge	4.76	0.79	4.58	0.88	1.02
Educator – skills	5.04	0.71	4.83	0.63	1.35
Educator – values	4.98	0.90	4.88	0.74	0.52
Image as an educator/leader	4.40	0.63	4.54	0.56	-0.99
Teacher – knowledge	4.72	0.68	4.79	0.57	-0.44
Teacher – skills	3.96	1.01	4.14	1.05	-0.81
Teacher – values	5.01	0.80	4.79	0.77	1.22
Image as a teacher	4.29	0.62	4.49	0.61	**-1.48**
Counselor - knowledge	4.51	0.90	4.33	0.91	0.92
Counselor – skills	4.59	0.86	4.54	0.81	0.30
Counselor – values	5.13	0.75	4.88	0.68	1.58
Image as a counselor	4.41	0.59	4.41	0.71	0.01
Caregiver - knowledge	4.79	0.78	4.96	0.85	-0.99
Image as a caregiver	4.10	0.72	4.45	0.76	**-2.16***

p<.01**, p<.05*

There were significant differences by religion in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager in general (t (195) = -2.75, p<.01). The perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager are more positive among non-Jewish participants in comparison to Jewish participants.

There were significant differences by religion in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver in general (t (195) = -2.16, p<.05). The

perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver are more positive among non-Jewish participants in comparison to Jewish participants.

There were no significant differences by religion in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image in all other categories.

Age

The relationship between the participants' age and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image were examined by a Spearman test. Table 19 presents the results.

Table 19: The Relationship between Age and the Kindergarten Teacher's Image (N=197)

Image Measures	Age
Manager - knowledge	-0.01
Manager – skills	-0.04
Manager – values	-0.03
Image as a manager	-0.05
Educator - knowledge	0.06
Educator – skills	0.11
Educator – values	0.11
Image as an educator/leader	0.12
Teacher - knowledge	0.12
Teacher – skills	**0.17***
Teacher – values	**0.14***
Image as a teacher	**0.14***
Counselor - knowledge	0.07
Counselor - skills	0.09
Counselor – values	0.06
Image as a counselor	**0.18****
Caregiver - knowledge	**0.18***
Image as a caregiver	0.04

$p<.01**$, $p<.05*$

There were significant positive correlations between age and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in the skills domain ($r_s = 0.17$, $p<.05$), in the values domain ($r_s = 0.14$, $p<.05$) and in the general image as a teacher ($r_s = 0.14$, $p<.05$). An older age is related to more positive perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in these categories.

There was a significant positive correlation between age and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor in general ($r_s = 0.18$, $p<.01$). An older age is related to more positive perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor in general.

There was a significant positive correlation between age and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver in the knowledge domain ($r_s = 0.18$, $p<.05$). An older age is related to more positive perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver in this domain.

Education

The relationship between the participants' education level and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image were examined by a Spearman test. Table 20 presents the results.

Table 20: The Relationship between Education and the Kindergarten Teacher's Image (N=197)

Image measures	Education
Manager – knowledge	-0.12
Manager – skills	**-0.15***
Manager – values	-0.02
Image as a manager	-0.10
Educator – knowledge	0.10
Educator - skills	0.06
Educator - values	**0.14***
Image as an educator/leader	0.03
Teacher - knowledge	0.06
Teacher - skills	0.06
Teacher - values	0.12
Image as a teacher	0.03
Counselor - knowledge	0.07
Counselor - skills	0.10
Counselor - values	-0.01
Image as a counselor	0.07
Caregiver - knowledge	0.07
Image as a caregiver	-0.11

p<.05*

There was a significant negative correlation between education level and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager in the skills domain (r_s = -0.15, p<.05). A higher education level is related to more negative perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager in this domain.

There was a significant positive correlation between the education level and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator in the values domain ($r_s =$ 0.14, p<.01). A higher education level is related to more negative perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator in this domain.

Religiosity

The relationship between the participants' religiosity level and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image were examined by a Spearman test. The results showed that there were no significant relationships between the participants' religiosity level and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image.

Socio-Economic Status

The relationship between the participants' socio-economic status and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image were examined by a Spearman test. The results showed that there were no significant relationships between the participants' socio-economic status and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image.

There is no connection between the number of children and the image.

There are no differences in the perception of the image by acquaintance with a kindergarten teacher.

Kindergarten Teacher's Seniority

The relationship between the kindergarten teacher's seniority and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image were examined by a Spearman test. Table 21 presents the results.

Table 21: The Relationship between Kindergarten Teacher's Seniority and the
Kindergarten Teacher's Image (N=67)

Image measures	Seniority
Manager - knowledge	0.03
Manager – skills	0.04
Manager – values	0.02
Image as a manager	0.13
Educator - knowledge	0.02
Educator – skills	0.02
Educator – values	0.07
Image as an educator/leader	**0.27***
Teacher - knowledge	0.01
Teacher – skills	0.21
Teacher – values	0.08
Image as a teacher	0.12
Counselor – knowledge	0.11
Counselor – skills	0.23
Counselor – values	0.03
Image as a counselor	**0.24***
Caregiver - knowledge	0.10
Image as a caregiver	**0.28***

$p<.05*$

There were significant positive correlations between the kindergarten teacher's seniority and the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's general image as an educator ($r_s = 0.17$, $p<.05$), as a counselor ($r_s = 0.14$, $p<.05$) and in the general image as a caregiver ($r_s = 0.14$, $p<.05$). Higher seniority of the kindergarten teacher is related to more positive perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image in these categories.

IV. Discussion

The objective of the present research study is to know and to understand the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israel society.

The aim is to research the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israel society from the perspective of: (1) the kindergarten teachers themselves, (2) the students of kindergarten education in three groups: first year students, third year students, and students in the program of the training for kindergarten education of academically educated workers, and (3) the parents of the kindergarten children who are the mirror of the kindergarten activity.

The main research question is: what is the image of the kindergarten teacher in society in Israel and what influences this image?

The review of the literature addresses the kindergarten teacher's range of roles, from which five main roles were selected for the present research: the kindergarten teacher as a manager, the kindergarten teacher as an educator and educational leader, the kindergarten teacher as a teacher (teaches, instills knowledge), the kindergarten teacher as a counselor, and the kindergarten teacher as a caregiver. The research respondents were asked to address in their personal opinion and perception the kindergarten teachers in their different roles and how in their opinion society and the media address these roles. From this, conclusions are drawn regarding the perception of the different groups of participants in the research of the kindergarten teacher's different roles and it will be possible not only to learn about the existence of a positive or a negative image but also to understand the components of the image and what influences it. In addition, the research addresses three meaningful elements that characterize the profession of the educator: knowledge, skills, and values that are expressed in the kindergarten teacher's different roles. The prominence of these characteristics will facilitate the understanding of the kindergarten teacher's image and the definition of the factors that influence the kindergarten teacher's image in Israeli society, in order to find and propose ways to improve the image.

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Another part of the research study addresses the ranking of the profession of the kindergarten teacher relative to other professions and poses questions that address the choice of the profession. Thus, it is possible to obtain a broad picture on the respondents' perception about the image of the profession of the kindergarten teacher in society relative to other professions.

The third part addresses the choice of the profession, what are the reasons for the choice of the profession in the opinion of the student participants who just now chose it, the kindergarten teachers, and the parents. Hence, it is possible to learn and to retrieve a little more information about what the respondents think on the professional image of the kindergarten teacher in society.

It is worthwhile to note that the reliability of the statements, as examined by Cronbach's alpha, was found to be high ($\alpha>0.72$) in all the parts that indicate a high degree of consistency and stability in the participants' responses in each one of the research parts.

Discussion of the Findings on the Research Hypotheses

1. **There are factors that differentiate the image of a kindergarten teacher in Israeli society.**

1.1 The image of the kindergarten teacher is perceived differently in relation to the various roles of the profession.

The findings indicate that this hypothesis was disconfirmed in part, while in part it was confirmed. The responses pertaining to the respondents' perception themselves of the kindergarten teacher's different roles indicate that most of the participants express moderate to high positive agreement regarding the declarations on the questions of how they perceive the components of knowledge, skills, and values in the kindergarten teacher's different roles as opposed to their response to the questions of how the kindergarten teacher is perceived in society and the media.

As an example of the management role, about 69% do not agree at all that the kindergarten teacher is presented in the media and in society as a manager of an educational institution. In contrast, 70% express moderate-high agreement that the kindergarten teacher has knowledge and skills in the topic of management.

The same holds true regarding the role of the educator and educational leader. Most of the participants, 77%, expressed moderate high agreement with the declarations that people trust the kindergarten teacher and the way the kindergarten teacher chooses to educate and even about 78% express high agreement that the influence of education in the kindergarten is apparent in children's homes as opposed to only 40% who responded greatly and very greatly that the kindergarten teacher is perceived in society as an educator and educational leader. This gap is expressed in most of the roles very prominently. A significant gap arises between the participants' perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as opposed to their response to the question of how the image is in the media and in society. These data are commensurate fully with what is noted in the review of the literature and researches of the National Authority for Measurement and Assessment (RAMA, 2017). In addition, according to the research of Gilat, Rosso Zimet, Claudy, and Tabac (2018), there is satisfaction with the kindergarten teachers' functioning but their image is low.

In the present research study all participants were asked to respond to the same questions according to their opinion, according to society, and according to the media. The attempt to explain the gap between the questions that pertain to the personal opinion and others that bring up the social representation is expressed in the review of the literature, where it is possible to see that the media and society nurture one another and influence one another.

McVale (2011) presents research studies that showed that the strength of the media influences was set by the community receiving the message no less than those sending the message. He further maintained that the media shapes the public opinion and the nature of the actual reality and structures the world picture of people in their society.

The fact is that in the building of a shared world of associations the media may assimilate or reinforce distorted concepts, including prejudices and stereotypes (Burton, 1990). The stereotypes have implications on the self-image. To process and organize considerable social information, we divide society into representations; when one representation enters the awareness, it brings up other representations related to it (Hopkins & Reicher, 1996). This explanation facilitates the understanding of the phenomenon, the individual's image is positive but the social representation raises negative associations and creates ad negative media social stereotype. The media, to say the least, does not flatter the teaching profession in general and the kindergarten teaching profession in particular. In the era of ratings in which we live, education and teaching are absent from the media. Education is perceived and presented as a field in which grayness and mediocrity prevail, and for the most part criticism is presented about the education system. Teaching is a topic that few that few boast about, and there is no representation of exemplary figures from the field of teaching or of unique projects (Wolansky, 2011).

In the Hebrew language, the term kindergarten teacher has become a general term that encompasses also the untrained assistant workers or the poorly trained caregivers. This is similar to the assistant workers in the hospitals and the nurses, although there it is inconceivable that they would be grouped into one group.

This was explained by Barthes (1977) as two levels. First there is denotation – the dictionary meaning, and second there is connotation, the accompanying the meaning, which is anchored in the recipient's culture and world. The recipient hears 'kindergarten teacher' and from his perspective this is equivalent to caregiver, assistant - the kindergarten teacher fills the same role. In everyday life in Israel, the parents call the staff members in the daycare centers by the Hebrew term that also means 'kindergarten teachers'[6]. This issue brings up a thought regarding the name of the profession and its meaning and necessitates thinking about the change of the name or the definition of who can use the name 'kindergarten teacher' just like a construction worker cannot use the term engineer.

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[6] In Hebrew the word for kindergarten teacher is the same word for any caregiver of a young child in a formal framework, whether preschool or daycare. This will be discussed in the continuation.

There is a misleading generalization that addresses the caregivers in the daycare centers and the assistants in the kindergartens as 'kindergarten teachers', since in the Hebrew language the word is a general term that also encompasses workers without any training or with the low level of training of a caregiver. This is similar to the assistant workers in hospitals and nurses, since it is inconceivable to collect them into one group.

In this research study, it is possible to see that there is no connection between the general image of the profession and the individual's personal experience in contact with the profession of the kindergarten teacher. For the most part, the individual's personal experience is good but it does not coalesce into a positive image of the profession; for instance, the publication of reports that examined the parents' satisfaction with the kindergarten and the climate in the kindergarten (National Authority for Measurement and Assessment in Education - RAMA, 2017) indicated that a considerable majority of the parents hold positive perceptions regarding main aspects of the climate in the kindergarten: 90% of the parents reported high general satisfaction with the kindergarten (in other word, in their perception the child likes going to the kindergarten, tells about pleasant experiences from the kindergarten, and feels safe and protected there). About 80% of the parents reported positive relations between the kindergarten staff and the child (in other words, the staff behaves with caring towards the child, is attentive to his requests, and the kindergarten teacher displays sensitivity to the child's unique needs). About 85% of the parents reported that the staff advances the children in different areas – emotional, social, and academic. This report did not receive a platform and public resonance, and what is absurd is that there is a huge discrepancy between the report and the atmosphere, the publications, and the image. This necessitates professional thinking of image people who specialize in image change on how to reduce the gap, how to connect between personal opinion and social opinion and media expression.

1.2 The image of the kindergarten teacher differs according to the research groups: students, kindergarten teachers, parents.

This hypothesis was fully confirmed. Significant differences were found between the research groups in the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image in general

(F(8.776)=8.34, p<.01) (see chart 3 in the chapter of the research findings), such as differences in the perception of the kindergarten teacher as a manager, students perceive the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager higher than do the kindergarten teachers (F(2,196)=3.13, p<.05). This gap can be explained in the segmentation of the kindergarten teachers' seniority. Most of the kindergarten teachers who responded, about 58%, have seniority of 16 years and more. The role definition of the kindergarten teacher began to be established only in recent years, and some still find it difficult to define the kindergarten teacher as a manager. In contrast, the students learn courses in kindergarten management as a part of their training, which is expressed in this response. Another finding that can be explained on the basis of seniority is that the kindergarten teachers perceive the image of the kindergarten teacher as an educator and educational leader higher than the parents do (F(2,196)=5.77, p<.01) and the field of the abilities (F(2,196)=4.66, p<.01). In addition, there were significant differences between the research groups in the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in the field of knowledge (F(2,196)=7.16, p<.01), in the field of skills (F(2,196)=8.96, p<.01), and in the field of values (F(2,196)=3.31, p<.05). It arises that the kindergarten teachers' perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in the field of knowledge and skills is higher in comparison to the parents. The kindergarten teachers' perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in the field of values is higher compared to the students. In addition, there were significant differences between research groups in the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher overall (F(2,196)=5.72, p<.01). As a rule, the kindergarten teachers perceive their image higher than do students and parents.

This finding raises questions regarding the definition of the professional image and professional identity in the literature review. I reviewed research studies that attempt to explain the concept of the professional identity relative to teachers (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Goodson, 1992; Louden, 1991; Tickle, 1999). It appears that the professional identity includes in it the professional image, or in other words, the integration of the personal and social identities. Here a significant gap arises between these perceptions. This gap can be explained by other findings in this research study that show that the kindergarten teacher is aware of the social image of the profession, when the kindergarten

teacher ranks the prestige of the profession in the lowest place, where there is broad agreement like the other groups of respondents that it is possible to conclude that the kindergarten teachers are aware of the prominent gap between the perception of the professional image and the perception in society.

In addition, it is impossible to ignore the assumption of Rodgers and Scott (2008), who maintained that the professional identity is built on the basis of a range of social, cultural, historical, and political contexts. It is built from relations with others, it is dynamic, and it attempts to be coherent. The cultural, social, and political contexts are very meaningful, and the attempt at coherence that is not yet expressed.

This picture is upended when talking about the kindergarten teachers' as caregiver. The parents' perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver is higher in comparison to those of kindergarten teachers ($F(2,196)=3.58$, $p<.05$). This finding again emphasizes the complexity of the issue of the name of the profession of the kindergarten teacher in Hebrew (as discussed previously) and the fact that the degree of the kindergarten teacher is included with the caregivers and assistants. It is important to work to enhance the differentiation between the different professions. A kindergarten teacher who is absorbed into the education system is required to meet threshold conditions so as to receive licensing and accreditation for teaching and to be absorbed fully. The kindergarten teacher must present an early childhood teaching certificate and an undergraduate academic degree, training that lasts four years, and in addition must complete successfully an induction year for early childhood kindergarten teachers that includes a workshop of 60 hours. The induction needs to be in the first year of the teaching in the kindergarten. In addition, there is a path of advancement from rank to rank of the in-service training course. According to the New Horizon Reform, the transition from rank to rank obligates the participation in in-service training courses. An in-service training course of at least thirty hours is required every year. At the rank of 1-2, 120 hours are required, at rank 3-6 180 hours, and at rank 9 210 hours. An assistant is a teaching aid for the kindergarten teacher who is employed by the local government and is not a teaching worker of the Ministry of Education. In the past, the profession of the teaching assistant in the kindergarten was called a kindergarten helper and included

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primarily unskilled and uneducated personnel. The teaching assistant served as assistive help. The Director General Circular of the Coordinator of Local Government from the year 2001 (with the approval of the Ministry of Education) determines that the kindergarten assistant will have at least twelve years of study in addition to the course for training assistants. It is possible to employ an assistant who has twelve years of study without training if the assistant commits during the first two years of work to successfully complete a training course.

A caregiver in her initial definition (Saphir Dictionary) is a person who provides for the needs of the children and the child's life setting in the school, the kindergarten, the daycare center, the private home (Avneon, 1997). In the daycare centers their role was defined by the Ministry of Finance in a document of standards and procedures for the implementation of educational frameworks for very young children from the year 2009. As a rule, the role is defined as providing an appropriate education for children, preserving respectful communication with the children's parents, holding normal work relations with the staff in the daycare centers, and participation in the meetings of instruction and in-service training for daycare centers (Hasisi, 2014). A caregiver participates in a type 1 training course includes 582 theoretical hours and 218 practical hours performed as practical work in the daycare centers. There is also a type 2 caregiver course, at the scope of 160 hours, with more advanced contents. A person who has a type 1 professional certificate is a caregiver for children in the daycare center who has proved that they have worked as a caregiver of children in a daycare center for at least one year after receiving this professional certificate. The completion certificate grants a professional certificate "manager of daycare center type 2" (Monikdam-Givon, 2017). The report addresses the caregivers in the supervised daycare centers, and there too a severe lack of caregivers is prominent, and many are accepted without any training at all (Monikdam-Givon, 2017).

The parent rightly expects care aspects in the kindergarten, which are defined as a part of the kindergarten teacher's responsibility, such as feeding the children, wiping noses, helping them go to the bathroom, and so on. Different documents published by the Ministry of Education on the topic, like the Director General's Circular (2001), which

addresses the potty-training and ending the use of diapers, assign to the kindergarten teacher the responsibility but note that along with the kindergarten teacher a caregiver or assistant will work, who will be aware of the fact that it is necessary to change diapers for untrained children. They recommend that it is necessary to emphasize in the definition of role of the assistant that the assistant is obligated to care for children and must be a meaningful figure for the child in the sensitive stages of the process of potty-training. However, because of the nature of the work in the kindergarten, one kindergarten teacher and one assistant in the kindergarten and for three year olds two assistants for 35 children, the kindergarten teachers in actuality also work with potty-training and other care elements. The limited staff does not enable a clear definition of the roles and the definition of the kindergarten manager is less relevant since the manager does not have somebody to manage the everyday functioning in the kindergarten. In addition, the nature of the relations created between the kindergarten teacher and the assistant when only the two of them are working in the kindergarten creates many situations in which the kindergarten teacher finds it difficult to implement these roles on the assistant alone, especially when the kindergarten teacher is young and the assistant is older.

Mevorach (2017) notes the delicate fabric of the relations between the assistant and the kindergarten teacher and that the reason for the conflicts that are sometimes created between them is the definition of roles that is not clear to the assistant. Mevorach emphasizes that the relations created in this relationship disrupt the management. It is important to note that there are kindergarten teachers who are busy with the everyday care aspects out of choice and love and even exempt their assistants from this work. Furthermore, they hold a conversation about the treatment aspect of the child, whether he ate, went to the toilet, changed clothing with the parents, and this further entrenches their image as caregivers. Either way, it is important to bring to the kindergarten teachers' awareness the image created in the parents' eyes. Even when this conversation is held, the kindergarten teacher must conduct it from the viewpoint of the kindergarten manager and not from the viewpoint of the caregiver.

It is important to note that significant differences did not arise in this research study in the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image in the group of students

between the different years of study: first year beginners, third year finishers, and the academic group participating in retraining for teaching in the kindergarten $(F(8,248)=0.86, p>.05)$.

In contrast, significant differences arose between these groups in questions that address the choice of the profession, regarding that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the salary $(F(2,64)=3.22, p<.05)$. The students in the first year express higher agreement with this declaration in comparison to students in academic training.

There were significant differences between the groups of students regarding the kindergarten teacher choosing the profession because of the low acceptance requirements for the academic studies $(F(2,64)=6.79, p<.01)$. The students in the last year express higher agreement with this declaration in comparison to students in academic training.

There were significant differences between groups of students regarding the kindergarten teacher choosing the profession because of the many vacations $(F(2,64)=5.13, p<.01)$. Students in the last year express higher agreement with this declaration in comparison to students in the first year.

There were significant differences between groups of students regarding the kindergarten teacher choosing the profession because of challenge and interest $(F(2,64)=5.97, p<.01)$. Students in the last year express lower agreement with this statement in comparison with students in the first year and students in academic training.

There were significant differences between groups of students regarding whether the respondent would want their children to learn the profession of the kindergarten teacher $(F(2,64)=3.29, p<.05)$. Students in the first year express a higher agreement with this statement in comparison to students in the last year and students in academic training.

As a rule, from these findings it is possible to understand that the image of the profession is better among first year students and the students in the programs for training academically educated people than among the third year students. It is possible to see

overwhelmingly a negative perception of the motives for the choice of the profession among third year students. In other words, their perception of the image is lower. It would be expected that in light of their experience and more in-depth familiarity with the profession that the image would rise but the opposite situation was created. This can be explained in that on the basis of the differences of seniority between the groups of students in the track for the training of the academically educated they learn in a short time (one year) and first year students only began the process of learning so they are closed to their choice of the profession while third year students generally after four years of study have been more exposed to difficulties, to the complaints of the kindergarten teachers who are training them, and to the negative public attitude. Likewise, another finding indicates significant differences also in the response to the question of whether I would want my children to choose the profession of the kindergarten teacher the first year students express higher agreement with this statement in contrast to the third year students and the academically educated students in the training program. This can be explained because of the seniority and young age. Of the students in the first year 32.3% are under the age of 25 and aged 25-29, while students in the third year and the re-training students have a higher mean age – they are all above 25 and about 50% are aged 30-39. The students in the retraining programs are generally parents themselves and their considerations on this topic are commensurate with the older age groups. However, differences were not found between the groups of students in the ranking of the prestige of the six professions. It was apparent that the status of the profession of the kindergarten teacher is low in society, and this is commensurate with the review of the literature. When we examine the status of a profession in society we examine how the professional status is perceived by others, parents of students, peers, and selves (Crompton, 1998; Hall & Langton, 2006). Hence, we received an unequivocal and miserable response that constitutes an initial point for the creation of change.

1.3 The image of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated by age.

There were significant positive relationships between age and the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher (rs=0.14, p<.05). An older age is linked with more positive perceptions of the image of the kindergarten teacher as a teacher in

these categories. A significant positive relationship between the age and the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor was found (rs=0.18, p<.01). An older age is linked with more positive perceptions of the image of the kindergarten teacher as a counselor. A significant positive relationship was found between the age and the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver (rs=0.18, p<.01). The adult age is linked with more positive perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a caregiver in this field. As a rule, significant positive relationships were found between age and the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image.

This is expressed especially in the field of the skills and in the field of the values. The relationship between age and these findings is clear. The respondents at an older age, whether students, parents, or kindergarten teachers, themselves are generally parents and have experienced / are experiencing parenting in the kindergarten. A relationship and personal acquaintance are created with the one or more kindergarten teachers. The regular everyday relationship engages generally in the role of the counselor, the caregiver, or in other words, roles that are the nature of the relationship with the parents. Skills and values are expressed in the children's homes and they are a mirror for the kindergarten activity, and this is lacking among the younger respondents who have not experienced parenting in the kindergarten and have experienced less personal interaction with the kindergarten teacher.

Conversely, this finding may be a bad indicator for what is coming. As a rule, younger people esteem the profession less, and they are the ones who deliberated or are deliberating the choice of the profession. This can be an indication that the image is still in a trend of decline.

1.4 The image of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated by gender.

There were significant differences by gender in the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher in the knowledge field (t(195)=2.94, p<.01) and in the field of the abilities (t(195)=3.79, p<.01) and in general the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher (t(195)=3.58, p<.01). The perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a teacher is more positive among women in comparison to men. In addition, the differences

in the field of the values were close to statistical significance (p=0.06), thus indicating a trend of more positive perceptions of the image of the kindergarten teacher as a teacher in the field of values among women. There were significant differences by gender in the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor in the field of abilities (t(195)=3.27, p<.01) and in the general kindergarten teacher's image as a counselor (t(195)=2.72, p<.01). The perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as an instructor is more positive among women than among men.

As a rule, the kindergarten teacher's image is more positive among women, and this is similar to a previous research study (Gilat & Wongrowitz, 2018), in which the kindergarten teacher's status is perceived as higher by women than by men. This research study focuses on the data and directs to certain roles of the kindergarten teacher.

These findings clearly show that the kindergarten teacher is perceived as a teacher more prominently by women than by men and is perceived more as a counselor among men than among women. In the other roles, no differences were found. It appears that according to men the kindergarten teacher is perceived as having a feminine role responsible for the children's growth and care and less as a teacher who instills knowledge and skills (Chaille, 1995). This datum teaches us about the lesser image of the profession relative and in comparison to teachers. The profession of the teacher is a profession defined as a female profession, but the profession of the kindergarten teacher is defined even more strongly as such, and thus men identify it less with teaching, education, and counseling and more with the caregiving facet.

These findings in the context of gender indicate the importance of the relationship that fathers have with the kindergarten teacher and with the kindergarten and their familiarity with what happens in the kindergarten, the needs of the kindergarten child, and learning during early childhood. Many research studies note the relationship with the parents, but when talking about the kindergarten the emphasis is placed on the mothers and generally the relationship is with them. Thus, there is room to examine how it is possible to involve the fathers more in the kindergarten activity and to expose them more,

mainly in the areas in which they recognize the kindergarten teachers less, such as teaching and instilling skills and values.

1.5 The image of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated by the respondents' economic situation.

There were significant differences by gender in the distribution of the socioeconomic situation between the research groups. Among the students, most of the participants, 83.1%, define themselves as of average situation, among the teachers (43.3%) and parents (30.8%) the socioeconomic situation is high and the low status only 1.5%. According to the Spearman Test, there is no meaningful relationship between the respondents' socioeconomic situation and the image of the kindergarten teacher.

The hypothesis derived from the fact that research studies indicate that as the parents' socioeconomic status is higher the involvement is greater. The assumption is that as the parents are more involved, they also formulate a clear positive or negative image of the educational institution and the teacher or kindergarten teacher (Robinson & Harris, 2014; Shumow & Miller, 2001).

However, according to the findings of the present research study, there is no influence on the image. It is possible that the explanation derives from the fact that the questionnaire was distributed among respondents randomly without direction and examination of the socioeconomic situation of the population and there is no appeal to disadvantaged neighborhoods and thus most of the respondents are from an intermediate and high status and only 1.5% are from a low status. This datum does not influence in this research study because of its size. To examine this, it is necessary to broaden the research, to turn intentionally to populations from low socioeconomic groups and in parallel to populations from high socioeconomic groups and to carry out a comparative research.

1.6 The image of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated by religion (Jewish or other).

This hypothesis was confirmed. The hypothesis was based on the fact that in Israel there is also an Arab population (Druse, Muslim, Christian). In Arab culture the teacher's image is higher. This research study indicated significant differences in the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager in general ($t(195)=-2.75$, $p<.010$). The image is more positive among non-Jews than Jews and the perception of the image of caregiver is higher among the non-Jews than among Jews ($t(195)=-2.16$, $p<.05$). This finding is especially interesting since these are two polar roles, as a manager and as a caregiver. This polarity in the kindergarten teacher's two roles can be explained in the changes that have occurred in Arab society in Israel. Arab society in Israel has not remained stagnant but is found in an accelerated process of social and cultural transition from a conservative society, which was based in the not so distant past on agricultural work, to a society with indications of modernity (Ben-David, 2004). Alongside this, the characteristics of a traditional society are retained by the different agents of socialization, including the school, in the pedagogical aspect in the teacher-student relations (Abu-Asba, 2007).

These data can be converted to the kindergarten and to the image of the kindergarten teacher. On the one hand, modernity and the change in the woman's status are expressed in the kindergarten teacher's role as a manager, the modern woman is accepted as a manager of an educational institution, and on the other hand, the relationship with the past, the kindergarten teacher as caregiver, the woman's role is expressed in the care of children.

1.7 The image of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated by level of religiosity.

In contrast to the previous hypothesis, this hypothesis, which stated that the image of the kindergarten teacher in the kindergarten is differentiated by the level of religiosity, was examined using the Spearman Test and was refuted. The results showed that there were no significant relationships between the level of religiosity and the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image. Most of the sample participants were secular and

traditional, ($\chi^2(8)=22.96$, p<.010). Among the kindergarten teachers (71.6%) and the parents (55.4%), most of the sample participants were secular. Among the students 52.3% of the participants were traditional.

There is no significant gap between these groups. According to the report carried out by the Israeli Association for Democracy (Arian, 2009), society in Israel is divided into four parts: Ultra-Orthodox, religious, traditional, and secular. In research studies carried out and in comparison between these groups in cultural, value-oriented, national, and other perceptions. The traditional and secular groups and mainly the secular group that is not anti-religious generally showed very similar results in the social cultural perceptions. Hence, it is possible to understand the reason why in this research study the differences were not significant.

1.8 The image of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated by level of education.

There were significant differences in the distribution of the education of the respondents in the research group: 70.8% of the students have a bachelor degree, 50.7% of the kindergarten teachers have a master degree, and 50.8% of the parents have a bachelor degree.

A significant negative relationship was found between the level of education and the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager in the field of abilities. A high level of education is associated with more negative perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as a manager in this field (rs=-0.15, p<.05). A significant positive relationship was found between the level of education and the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator in the field of values. A high level of education is related to more positive perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image as an educator in this field (rs=0.14, p<.01). This finding, like reports and researches published, makes a direct relationship between involvement, criticism, and level of education. In the report of the OECD in the year 2012, the index of education was found to influence the social involvement, satisfaction, level of income, healthy, and so on. The assumption is that the explanation lies in the cognitive and social-emotional abilities acquired through education (Kartiokov, 2012).

Regarding the group of parents, as the parents are more educated, the level of criticism towards the school rises. They criticize the teachers' level and the methods of teaching and they think that the fact that they have an education gives them the right to disagree on both school policy and teacher level (Friedman & Fisher, 2002). Most of the research studies presented by Fisher and Friedman (2009) determine that there is a direct correlation between the level of education and income and the level of involvement of the parents in education. As the level of education and income are higher, the parents' involvement in the educational process increases. Since they have acquired more cognitive and social instruments with which to measure, evaluate, and critique, it is possible to see that there is increased appreciation among more educated people of the kindergarten teacher's role as an educator. The relationship is positive: as people are more educated, their assessment of the kindergarten teacher as an educator increases. The differentiation between the two types of roles of the kindergarten teacher is prominent: roles that can be measured and evaluated, such as the children's education, influence on their system of values, language, and behavior that is open to whomever comes with them into contact: home, community, students, and in contrast, roles that only people who are closer to the kindergarten teacher, such as supervisor and partners can evaluate, such as kindergarten management. This is a less externalized role, and it does not have visibility in the community and at home.

This role is less appreciated by those who do not know the profession well, and therefore this role receives a low score from the respondents. In this role a negative relationship is created: as their perception of the role is low, there is again lack of knowledge and awareness of the role requirements and required management abilities.

1.9 The image of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated in the group of kindergarten teachers by the different seniority in their work.

The assumption is that the work seniority has influence on the perception of the self-image of the profession of the kindergarten teacher.

The professional self-image of teachers derives from the way in which they perceive themselves and their role in society. This image has a direct impact on the

teacher's functioning and the children's achievements (Combs, Blume, Newman, & Wass, 1981).

The present research study indicates that there are significant positive relationships between the kindergarten teacher's seniority and the general perception of the image of the kindergarten teacher as an educator (rs=0.17, p<.05), as an instructor (rs=0.14, p<.05), and in general as a caregiver (rs=0.14, p<.05). Higher seniority of the kindergarten teacher is related to more positive perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image in these roles. The findings show that at a high seniority there is focus on the roles that are more care-oriented. The participants with the highest seniority tend to see their professional role from the care aspect. According to the definition of Hargreaves (2000), this is 'emotional geography'. The figure of the 'caregiver' represents a progressive approach in education that supports the existence of relations of caring, like Noddings (1984, 1992) who sees it to be most vital to the teacher's work.

On the one hand, this is a finding that indicates professionalism, since teachers are expected above all to act on the basis of their knowledge in a caring and professional manner. The intention is to address the student's educational needs (Beck, 2006, p. 352). On the other hand, the professional and senior kindergarten teachers are expected to place greater emphasis on the instructional and managerial facet in the professional self-image, since they expect this of others, in order to create a clearer differentiation between them and the non-professional caregiver.

This finding is in contrast to the findings of the previous researches that compared between teachers of schools in upper classes and students of teaching who intend to teach in these classes, where the findings were reversed – the students perceived themselves more as caregivers than did the older teachers (Mandelson, 2012). This image was perceived as logical in society relative to the upper classes, where it is natural to think more about the instructional academic facet as opposed to the kindergarten teachers, where the care facet is more central to the point of the blurring of the identity and focus only on the caregiving figure.

This finding fits in well with the research literature, according to which the process of the building of the professional identity is a result of a dialogue between what the teacher perceives as important in his work and his professional role and the perceptions and expectations of other people of him (Reynolds, 1996; Tickle, 1996). Zembylas (2003) analyzed the shaping of the identity as a developing process that is influenced by different experiences that the teacher has experienced and they feed the deliberations about the identity.

The student experienced the experience in the kindergarten but still in a partial and minimal manner. In the student's curriculum there are courses engaging in the kindergarten management, knowledge in different disciplines, and teaching strategies, while in contrast the senior kindergarten teacher is exposed every day to the expectations of others – parents, the community, the media, and the self-image is influenced by this, and with optimistic thinking it is possible to interpret this also as the start of the next change, which is expressed in the intergenerational difference in the image of the profession of the kindergarten teacher.

1.10 The image of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated in the group of kindergarten teachers by the socioeconomic region where the kindergarten is situated.

This hypothesis, like hypothesis 1.3, derives from the belief that the socioeconomic situation has impact on the perception of the image. This hypothesis examined the difference between the perceptions of the kindergarten teacher's image of the profession in the context of the place where they work. The group of kindergarten teachers in this research study on this issue is divided into three groups: low status, about 17%, intermediate status, 44.8%, and high status, 37.3%. Significant differences were not found between the groups in the kindergarten teacher's image. In other words, the location of the kindergarten and the population with which the kindergarten teacher works do not influence the image. The relationship between the parents' socioeconomic situation and the children's achievements and successes has been often researched and its influences proven in different research studies.

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However, the question is focused on whether there are implications of the socioeconomic characteristics on the kindergarten teacher's professional image. It was possible to assume that these characteristics have influence on the kindergarten teacher's sense of worth; the sense of worth is a significant component in the professional development and in the professional image, but the findings indicate that there is no relationship and this is like a large international research of the OECD (2018), the second part of which was recently published and shows a regression in Israel in all the measures of the teachers' perception of worth. However, a relationship was not found between the teacher's assessment and different characteristics of the school, like socioeconomic situation. It is possible to conclude from this about the kindergartens. In the Talis report (OECD, 2018), there is differentiation between the center and the periphery, but this datum was not examined in the present research study.

1.11 The image of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated in the group of parents: differentiated by the degree of familiarity with the kindergarten teacher and differentiated among parents who have one to three children.

The sample of the parents answered two additional questions relative to the other respondents. "How many children do you have in the kindergarten?" and "Do you know the kindergarten teacher personally (among your good friends or relatives)?" This assumes that a degree of personal familiarity with the kindergarten teacher and with the many requirements of the profession, the knowledge, and the broad content required of the kindergarten teacher, the many skills, etc., will influence her image in the respondents' eyes. About 41.5% do not know the kindergarten teacher personally, while about 58.5% do know the kindergarten teacher personally, and despite the familiarity there are no differences in their perception of the kindergarten teacher's image. This hypothesis was refuted: a relationship was not found between the level of familiarity and the image. Among 64.6% of the respondents, this is the first child, among 24.6% this is the second child, and 10.85% this is the third and fourth child. However, this datum – the number of children who were educated in the kindergarten – does not have an impact on the image of the profession. This sharpens the gap in the kindergarten teacher's

perception of the role between the complexity of the role and its requirements and the appreciation of it (Shimoni & Baxter, 1996).

This finding indicates that the parents of a second or third child in the kindergarten are not aware of the nature and complexity of the role. Not enough is being done until today in the exposure of the role and a person who looks from outside of the walls of the kindergarten, even if he knows the kindergarten teacher personally, does not really know about the kindergarten teacher's broad role and does not have information about the manner of training and the professional development required in the training process.

In other words, empathy for the profession of the kindergarten teacher is lacking. Empathy is mainly an expression of 'being with' the other person. An empathetic process results in respect and appreciation (Ickes & Decety, 2009).

High order thinking is required on the issue of how it is possible to inspire empathy for the profession and how it is possible to expose more people to the training process and to what is required of the kindergarten teacher in order to manage a quality kindergarten.

1.12 The image of the kindergarten teacher is differentiated within the student group between first year education students and third year education students and academic training program students.

This hypothesis derived from the belief that as the student learns more about the profession and is exposed to its complexity in the training process, the image of the profession in the student's eyes will rise. However, this hypothesis was refuted. Significant differences were not found between the groups of the students in the perception of the kindergarten teacher's image in all the categories ($F(8,248)=0.86$, $p>.05$).

Table 12 indicates that students come with a certain image of the profession and end with the same image. The familiarity with the kindergarten teacher, the experience,

and the entire training process – do not change the perception of the image in their eyes, for students from the program for training academics and students in the regular program.

In the research literature there is agreement between the researchers (Flores & Day, 2006; Lortie, 1975; Sugrue, 1997) that the professional identity of the students of teaching grows from their perception of the teaching, the teacher's role, and the image of the good teacher. Great importance is accorded to the exposure and understanding of these perceptions. Research studies (Calderhead, 1996; Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992) indicate that the experience of the past that students have as pupils in the school influences the beliefs about teaching and learning and therefore the teacher's image. For the most part, the training process does not create a change in this image unless it aims to do so.

Research studies indicate that to develop a professional identity and a high professional image it is necessary to carry out a professional dialogue and to expose the students to diverse sources (Coldron & Smith, 1999). In the process of the training, it is necessary to include not only knowledge of the content field and knowledge on teaching but also exposure of the personality theories that the students develop. These theories are influenced by the student's immediate environment, observations the student performed, episodes related to teaching, and the contexts in which he acts. These theories are not declared; generally they are hinted at and therefore it is necessary to process them in order to bring them into the awareness (Calderhead, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Pajares, 1992).

The findings in this research study reinforce these theories and emphasize the need to work on the topic of the professional image with students of teaching in the kindergarten in the process of their training, to bring the topic up for discussion, and to engage in ways to improve and to change the image.

1.13 The kindergarten teacher's rating is differentiated by the various groups.

In the review of the literature, the review of Ben Peretz (2009) was presented, covering different theories that explain the social status of the profession, its contribution

to society, and the resources that the professionals have to offer to society (Sholov-Barkan, 1991).

The prestige of the profession derives not only from the existence of knowledge but also from the quality of the community of clients (Feigin, 1999). The professional status is influenced by the social organization, political and economic conditions, and technological innovations (Ben David, 1980).

There two main components were noted, professional prestige and evaluation of the professionalism. Professional prestige expresses the evaluation of the public of the profession in comparison to tis evaluation of other professions. The evaluation of the professionalism is based on the evaluation of the public of the professional abilities of the professional (Crompton, 1998; Hall & Langton, 2006).

Therefore, the respondents were asked to rank the profession relative to other professions. The findings indicate that the profession ranked the highest is the doctor, while the profession ranked the lowest in its social status and social prestige is the kindergarten teacher (Table 14). In the examination of the differences between the research groups in the ranking of the social status and prestige of the professions of doctor, engineer, lawyer, career military person, teacher, and kindergarten teacher, no differences were found at all. The parents, the kindergarten teachers, and the students ranked the professions in the same order, when the highest was the doctor and the lowest was the kindergarten teacher (F(10, 970)=1.61, p>.05). The ranking of the parents and the kindergarten teachers themselves of the profession of the kindergarten teacher as lowest among the other professions is not surprising and is a part of the reasons for the existence of this research study, already from a previous research (Gilat, Rosso Zimet, Claudy, & Tabac, 2018). The research found that there is a significant gap between the kindergarten teacher's status in the parents' eyes and the kindergarten teacher's status in society's eyes (as the parents perceive this). While most of the parents (86%) report that the kindergarten teacher's status in their eyes is high, when they were asked about the kindergarten teacher's status in society most of them (70%) maintained that it is low. What creates this gap and why the profession of the kindergarten teacher is ranked so

low, with the kindergarten teacher's position unequivocally in the last place overwhelmingly and clearly after the teacher in the elementary school or the high school? The low social status of the profession relative to the teacher is discussed by Mevorach (2017). According to Mevorach, regarding educational leadership in early childhood, more than ten state committees have been appointed since the 1950s in order to cause a reform in the education system in Israel, for instance the Guri Committee in 1960, the Etzioni Committee in 1979, and the Dovrat Committee in 2004, among others. A main component in the work and recommendations of these committees is the improvement in the teacher's status in Israel. Despite all these efforts, a significant difference has not occurred in the teacher's status, as can be seen from the public discourse in Israel and researches on their status. Thus, for example, a survey of the Central Bureau of Statistics found that following the New Horizon Reform there was no increase in the demand for the teaching profession and there was a rise in the dropping out of new teachers (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2015). The kindergarten teacher's social status is expressed in the educational and public discourse in Israel far less than the teacher's status is and is accorded far less research attention, as made clear by the review of the professional literature in this field. The findings of the present research study show that the kindergarten teacher's social status is lower than the teacher's status in the eyes of parents of children who learn in early childhood education. This finding is rather surprising, in light of the fact that the professional requirements that the kindergarten teacher must meet are not different from the requirements that the teacher must meet. The two professions obligate academic training, necessitate participation in frameworks of professional development, and are perceived as requiring a high level of professionalism, as indicated in the present research study about the kindergarten teachers and in a previous research study about teachers (Gilat & Wongrowitz, 2018). Moreover, in recent years the position of the kindergarten teacher is changing, and the kindergarten teacher's role is defined as a kindergarten manager (Mevorach, 2017).

This finding poses questions regarding the choice of the profession. Differences were not found between the groups of students in the ranking of the six professions (Table 16). All the students ranked the doctor at the highest ranking and the kindergarten teacher at the lowest ranking.

This research study examined the students' perception. This finding is clear: the students without differentiation between the groups are aware of the low status of the profession in society. Hence, the question is asked – why did they choose it? Questions arise regarding the choice of the profession.

1.14 The motives for the selection of the profession will be differentiated by the various groups.

The examination of the motives will add another step in the understanding of the image of the profession. What do the parents, teaching students, and kindergarten teachers themselves think? Statements were given that address the internal and external motives. The motives for the choice of the teaching profession are divided according to the research studies into two groups, extrinsic motives related to material rewards, such as salary, working and welfare conditions, and social status, and intrinsic motives related to essential characteristics of the profession and the satisfaction with the engagement in it (Pink, 2009). The low image of the profession raises the expectation that for the most part extrinsic findings will be found, but the research findings indicate that most of the participants agree (greatly-extremely) with the declarations that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the desire for it (76%), an intrinsic motive, and that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the many vacations (59%), an extrinsic motive – or in other words, there is a contradiction. When we examine this finding a little more in-depth, significant differences arise between the group of the parents and the group of the kindergarten teachers and the students. It was found that for the statements that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession for the salary, the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of low requirements for acceptance to the studies, and the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the many vacations, the parents express higher agreement than do the kindergarten teachers and the students. For the statements that the kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the desire for the profession, the parents express lower agreement than do the kindergarten teachers and the students. In other words, in the parents' opinion, the kindergarten teachers chose the profession because of extrinsic motives while the kindergarten teachers indicate more intrinsic motives.

This finding shows us the gap between the research groups. The parents automatically affiliate to the profession of the kindergarten teacher the salary conditions and vacations, a finding that does not have a relationship with the data in reality. According to the data of the Education at a Glance report (OECD, 2019), the salary of the teachers in Israel, including the kindergarten teachers, in every age group and at all stages of education is lower than that of other workers in the economy with the same education and in the same age group. In addition, the statutory salary of the kindergarten teacher in a fulltime position with fifteen years of experience and typical training in Israel is lower by 17% than the mean salary of the kindergarten teacher in the OECD, and is $35,025 while the annual salary of a beginning kindergarten teacher is $24,400. This salary situates Israel in the bottom third of the OECD countries. Therefore, it is clear that the parents are not aware of the data or that the stigma contributes to the distortion of the data and to a distorted view of the intrinsic interests in the choice of the profession.

Regarding the vacations, it is known that this is an eye-popping figure for the kindergarten teacher / teacher in Israel since there are about 73 vacation days and about 209 study days. In a comparison to the world, the Education at a Glance Report (OECD, 2019) indicates that the number of study days in the Israeli education system is among the highest of all the countries in the organization – as opposed to 201 in Japan, 188 in Finland, and 162 in France. The mean number of study days in the countries of the organization is 183 days. The anger and resentment regarding the teachers' vacation days increased further in summer 2020, following the coronavirus crisis. This feeling derives apparently from the fact that in Israel the average couple works 250 hours a year more than does the average couple in the United States, 700 hours a year more than the average couple in France, and 500 or 450 hours more than the average couple in Germany (OECD Better Life Index, 2019).

This creates a significant lack of correspondence between the work economy and the education system in Israel, when the children are on vacation and the parents are required to work and find it difficult to identify solutions for their children. This datum inspires anger and antagonism against the teaching workers and contributes to their being a social economic punching bag for the country. This is a very significant component that

influences the public image of teachers and kindergarten teachers in Israel. In addition, it is important to note that the work hours noted on the kindergarten teachers' salary slip are not actual work hours. From my close familiarity with the profession of the kindergarten teacher (I worked for 20 years as a manager of a kindergarten) I can testify that many work hours above the defined hours of the position are dedicated both to the relationship with the parents and to the organization of the educational environment that is possible when the kindergarten is empty of the children, and of course to the planning of the studies and the creation of contents, to the making of purchases for the kindergarten, to the filling out of considerable paperwork, to participation in in-service training courses and to many other tasks, while in most professions in the economy the work ends with the end of the work hours.

Regarding the manner of acceptance to the studies, there is a gradual improvement in this field in recent years. According to the data of the Central Bureau of Statistics (2019), the mean on the psychometric test of teaching students in the year 2019-2020 increased by 4%. The mean of the high school matriculation certificate scores rose by 6%. The score of the fit between the psychometric test and the high school matriculation certificate increased significantly, relative to what it was ten or more years ago. In other words, there is a process of improvement but the fact is that it is still low (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

On the other hand, some see an advantage in the low requirements of acceptance to the profession, a datum that contributes as a consideration in the choice. Feigin and Kfir (1994) maintained that the conditions that make it easy for the students to be accepted into the institutions of teacher training are among the factors that attract people to engage in this profession. The data reflect the lack of investment in the high school in the matriculation certificate and the psychometric examination and some call this a choice that derives from lack of options, but in the process of training the learner undergoes an intensive and essential process. The mean of the psychometric examination of those who turn to the education studies last year was only 423, which is the lowest of all professions, when in medicine it was 727, the highest. A function of supply and demand, the number of people turning to teaching decreases, and in parallel there is a

lack of teaching workers in general and kindergarten teachers in particular. The variety of professions offered today is great, and with them there is a better salary. The training for teaching lasts four years and is intensive and requires considerable investment. The process of the entry into the profession is more complex according to the complexity of the profession, which also increases (Abu Alhijah, Fresko, & Reichenberg, 2011). In addition, 20% of those engaging in teaching leave the profession within three years and ten percent leave already in the first year. The highest rates of departure were noted among the kindergarten teachers (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

The finding that there were significant differences between the research groups in regard to the intrinsic motives is disappointing. The findings indicate that the parents express lower agreement relative to the kindergarten teachers and students to statements that the kindergarten teacher chose a profession because of the contributions to society and because of a challenge, a finding that indicates the lack of fit between what the kindergarten teachers and students feel on their choice and what the parents, who are the actual clients of the kindergarten, feel. This emphasizes the gap and obligates creative thinking on the way in which messages will be conveyed to the parents and more meaningful reflection of the role of the kindergarten teacher.

Moreover, only 25.4% of all the respondents would want their child to be a kindergarten teacher to a great or very great extent, and all the rest moderately or slightly or not at all. Research studies indicate that a significant part of the choice of the profession is a reflection of the parents' desires. Smilansky (1993) noted that the family is the main cause with the greatest influence on the making of the decisions, since it is considered the primary and meaningful agent of socialization for the individual. The family influences the individual's professional development in two ways: first in the opportunities it affords the individual and second in the family processes that it creates, or in other words in a conscious and unconscious manner when people choose their profession they are influenced by their family. Therefore, this datum inspires concern about the continuation of the demand for the profession in the future.

1.15 The motives for the selection of the profession will be differentiated within the student group: between first-year education students, and third-year education students and academic training courses.

Significant differences were found between the groups of first year students, third year student, and academic training course students in the motives for the choice of the profession. Significant differences were found between the groups of students regarding the kindergarten teacher's choice of the profession because of the salary ($F_{(2,64)}=3.22$, $p<.05$). Students in the first year express higher agreement with this statement in comparison to students in academic training.

There were significant differences between groups of students regarding the kindergarten teacher's choice of the profession because of the low requirements for acceptance into academic studies ($F_{(2,64)}=6.79$, $p<.01$). Students in the last year express higher agreement with this statement in comparison to students in academic training.

There were significant differences between groups of students regarding the kindergarten teacher's choice of the profession because of the many vacation days ($F_{(2,64)}=5.13$, $p<.01$). Students in the last year express higher agreement with this statement in comparison to students in the first year.

There were significant differences between groups of students regarding the kindergarten teacher's choice of the profession out of challenge and interest ($F_{(2,64)}=5.97$, $p<.01$). Students in the last year express lower agreement with this statement in comparison to students in the first year and students in academic training.

There were significant differences between groups of students with regard to wanting their children to choose the profession of the kindergarten teacher ($F_{(2,64)}=3.29$, $p<.05$). Students in the first year express higher agreement with this statement in comparison to students in the last year and students in academic training.

In the research literature (Feigin, Mashiach, & Wally, 1991; Pink, 2009), the tendency is to divide the motives for the choice of the profession between extrinsic motives related to material rewards, such as salary, work conditions, welfare, and social

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status, and intrinsic motives related to essential characteristics of the profession and satisfaction with this engagement.

As a rule, it appears that the first year students and the students of the academic re-training program note more internal motives of the choice of the profession, while the third year students note more external motives of the choice of the profession, such as vacations, low requirements and expressed lower agreement regarding the choice out of interest.

In other words, the image of the profession in their eyes is lower. It is possible to explain this in that the students in the first year have not yet experienced a kindergarten, since in the first year they learn in the college and in the second semester they gain experience in daycare centers. They are closer to their choice but do not yet know sufficiently the kindergartens from up close. Students from the program for the training of the academically educated in the stage in which they responded to the questionnaire were only one semester in the kindergarten. In contrast, students in the third year have already been at least four semesters in kindergartens and have experienced the experience of being in a kindergarten. They have gotten to know the profession, and already a negative image has been created. This is a worrisome finding that again emphasizes the role of the training institution in the building of the image of the training profession.

Regarding the training of people with an academic education, it should be noted that in this training most people are older, in their second career, around the age of forty, who chose the profession for the most part out of internal motives – a feeling of destiny and mission. Therefore, the choice from inner motives suits this group more.

V. Conclusion

1. Summary

The profession of the kindergarten teacher frequently appears on the social agenda in different contexts. There is awareness of the necessity of the profession both because of economic reasons that influence the entire economy that derive from the parents' need to work when the children will stay in a framework and because of the clear influence that education in early childhood has on the continuation of the child's life and the influences of the kindergarten on the family and society. For these reasons, it would be expected that the image of the profession be especially high; however the situation is reversed, the image of the profession is low in Israel and in most countries of the world. The status of the profession of the kindergarten teacher detrimentally influences young people's choice of this profession and distances people with high abilities from it. The image of the profession of the kindergarten teacher is discussed in this research study, as is its influence on the choice of the profession and the social reference to it relative to other professions.

The research literature indicates about the process and time required in order to make a teacher into an expert, the many roles in the profession of the kindergarten teacher, the complexity of the profession and the range of the skills, knowledge, and values required to fill this role appropriately and professionally (Beane, 1995; Brandt, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Department of Preschool Education, Ministry of Education, 2010; Maskit, 2012; MATANA, 2019; Vidislavsky, Zairi, et al., 2013).

The professionalization of the profession of the kindergarten teacher is, as aforementioned, a lengthy and continuous process. Even after the end of the academic studies, the kindergarten teachers learn and participate in in-service training throughout their professional career in different topics and core areas, such as literacy and language; mathematics, science, nature, and technology; art and life skills; digital media and its integration in the kindergarten (Ministry of Education, Education for Early Childhood, 2019). The training and the in-service training courses address the range of pedagogical

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and educational approaches and additional aspects such as management of the kindergarten, parent-kindergarten teacher relations, design of the environment, ways of work, daily agenda in the kindergarten, short term and long term planning, documenting and reporting, and a wide variety of aspects that are included in the broad and multifaceted role of the kindergarten teacher.

On the background of the many and complex characteristics of the profession of the kindergarten teacher and the many roles of the kindergarten teacher, as expressed in the professional literature reviewed in the present research study (see, for example, Biger, 2003; Frish, 2012; Mevorach, 2017; Ministry of Education, Preschool Education Website, 2019; Rahm, 1997; Stodney, 2009) and on the background of the negative public perception of the teaching profession in general and of early childhood education in particular, the present research study examined the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israeli society from the perspectives of the parents, the students of kindergarten education, and the kindergarten teachers themselves. The findings reveal with greater detail the image of the kindergarten teacher as the research participants perceive it, as they think it is reflected in society, and as they receive the impression from the way in which it is reflected in the media.

The findings differentiate between the perception of the parents, the students of kindergarten education, and the kindergarten teachers and address the image of the kindergarten teacher in detail according to the kindergarten teacher's main roles. The findings indicate that the image of the profession of the kindergarten teacher in the media and in society as a manager, an educator, a teacher, a counselor, and a caregiver is low. Furthermore, there is prominent agreement that there is no clear distinction between caregiver and kindergarten teacher (greatly to very greatly). In contrast, most of the research respondents believe that the kindergarten teacher has the knowledge and skills for the performance of these roles.

The research study further indicates that in the ranking of the profession of the kindergarten teacher relative to other professions, there is absolute agreement among the respondents. The parents, kindergarten teachers, and students of kindergarten education

ranked the six professions according to their social status and social prestige in the same order: the highest ranking was granted to the doctors and the lowest ranking to the kindergarten teachers.

In the motives for the choice of the profession of the kindergarten teacher, in contrast, the research found that most of the participants responded to a very great degree both about the internal motives, like passion for the profession and about the external motives, such as many vacations.

In the three parts of the research study significant differences are apparent between the research groups and differences in the research groups in the subgroups. As detailed in the chapter of the discussion, of the hypotheses, the decisive majority was significant and was confirmed, from which it is possible to learn greatly about the kindergarten teacher's image, except for three hypotheses. The hypothesis that the kindergarten teacher's image is differentiated according to the degree of familiarity with her was disconfirmed. This hypothesis was not significant enough because of the lack of definition of what is meaningful familiarity; familiarity with a person does not necessarily include familiarity with the nature and way of the profession engaged in. Regarding the hypothesis that addresses the differentiation by sociodemographic datum (as noted in the chapter of the discussion), in retrospect it became clear to me that this datum entails the dissemination of the questionnaire intentionally in the periphery region of the country. Another hypothesis regarding the level of religiosity also was refuted. The research population included participants from both state and state religious education, because of my lack of access to the Ultra-Orthodox community (in the continuation I will recommend further research in this community).

2. Conclusions

The present research study has a contribution both to the theoretical aspect and the practical aspect. From a theoretical viewpoint, the contribution of this research work is its extension of the knowledge about the social image of the profession of the kindergarten teacher, with its different roles and components in the eyes of the parents, students, and kindergarten teachers, the extension of the knowledge in a detailed manner

about the components of each role and its components – knowledge, skills, and values, and the extension of the knowledge of the motives for the choice of the profession of the kindergarten teacher from the viewpoints of the parents, kindergarten teachers, and students.

From a practical perspective, this work has important practical implications, which focus on the kindergarten teachers, the parents, the students, and general conclusions.

I choose to refrain from mentioning one of the factors that influence the image, which is the salary. I believe that it is best to focus on applied conclusions that depend on the kindergarten teachers themselves, the institutions for the training of the kindergarten teachers, the students of education, and the parents.

Regarding the kindergarten teachers, the gap between the personal opinion on the profession as opposed to how it is expressed in the media and in society is very great, and to reduce it and to create a change, first the kindergarten teachers' awareness of the topic is needed. The kindergarten teachers are busy with their full and demanding daily schedule and do not devote themselves to the subject of their image, beyond the resentment and defensiveness that are sometimes heard on social networks and in kindergarten teacher meetings. This topic is not discussed. The topic must be brought to the agenda, first of the public of the kindergarten teachers themselves. The Ministry of Education has carried out many changes in recent years in the Department of Primary Education, and I assume the goal is indirectly to create a change in the image of the profession. The wonderful programs that the Ministry of Education is leading through the Department of Primary Education in recent years, Kindergartens of Initiative and the Kindergarten of the Future, advance the activity in the kindergarten. However, they have not changed the image of the kindergarten teacher, despite the great satisfaction of the parents, as noted in this research work. To create a change in the image, it is necessary to recruit the kindergarten teachers themselves to action and with the kindergarten teachers to create the context and connection between the activity and the professional image of the kindergarten teacher. It is necessary to have the thinking and professional assistance

on the part of image people who specialize in the change of image and the change of stereotypes, professional work that has the goal of reducing the gap and teaching how to connect between the personal opinion and the social opinion and media expression, on how to create a coherent and positive image.

There are professionals from the field of advertising and image who have the professional tools for the change of the image. It is most important to recruit the kindergarten teachers to the change. The public of kindergarten teachers is an extensive public, throughout all parts of the country, with diverse abilities. They must be exposed to research studies and research implications and be recruited to act to change the public image of their profession. It is possible to begin with thinking groups, steering committees, and then activity. It is also possible to act and to recognize this as an in-service training course from the nationwide constellation of in-service training courses and recruit the support and leadership of the teacher organizations (in this case, the Teacher Union), to create a nationwide organized mechanism in which representatives from all the districts meet and decide how to act. This mechanism is helped by digital media and updates the public of kindergarten teachers and maintains their awareness on the topic. The essential change can and is supposed to come from the kindergarten teachers themselves.

Regarding the students, another significant conclusion that arises from this research study is that the colleges of teacher training have a significant role in the change of the image during the training. A surprising finding from my perspective was that the comparison between first year students and third year students indicated that as the familiarity with the profession increased the professional image is more negative. Here, too, it is possible to do much. It is necessary to address the students as ambassadors of change. They are the significant force that goes out and is absorbed for the most part in the job market; they enter the profession with the feeling that they have chosen a profession with a low image and they accept this and leave with the feeling that it is lower than they had thought.

As a trainer of kindergarten teachers in the college (a lecturer and a pedagogical instructor), I see the need and even the obligation to increase the awareness, to work on the topic of the professional image with students of kindergarten education in the process of their training, to know its components, to bring this topic to discussion, and to engage in ways to improve it and to change the image, as well as to search for ways to create change and to recruit the young students as ambassadors who will lead the change, both in the social networks, through the creation and dissemination of advertisements and films, and in their work in the future with the parents. As a part of the training, the students learn to operate and use different digital tools. It is possible to give them as a task to create films on their image for the kindergartens in which they are doing their practicum and in addition to encourage students to perform researches and seminar works on the topic.

The third group is the parents. This is a target community that is accessible to the kindergarten teachers and is generally satisfied with the performance of the kindergarten teacher and the kindergarten. However, the image of the profession of the kindergarten teacher is low in their eyes. This research study prominently indicates that this community is insufficiently aware of the role of the kindergarten teacher as a teacher who teaches and as a manager. The parents are not sufficiently exposed to the complexity of the kindergarten teacher's role, and there is a large gap between what is seen from the distance as a parent and the greater depth of familiarity. This finding connects to my work as a trainer of the kindergarten teachers: I work with students who are mothers in the program for the training of academically educated workers for the profession and who are astounded by the range of roles and the professional work required, when as parents they had not realized that the profession is so complex and requires so many skills and so much knowledge. It is necessary to reduce this gap through the more detailed exposure on the profession of the kindergarten teacher, the process of training. Everyone knows what is the daily schedule of a nurse in a hospital and what is required of her, but there is no similar knowledge about the role of the kindergarten teacher. Hence, it is possible to create films, a day in the life of the kindergarten, and to instill in them messages about the various roles and the required professionalism, to create programs with panels of professional discourse, and to incorporate in the products from the kindergartens

messages that share this activity. It is possible to advertise inspirational activity and figures of kindergarten teachers. In addition, this research study presents that the fathers have a lower image of the professional aspects in the kindergarten teacher's work. Another conclusion on this matter is the attention to the discourse and information, with emphasis on the fathers.

The influence on the home may create a change in the motives of the choice of the profession and in the choice of students with higher grades and better abilities of the profession. As was described in the review of the literature, the home has influence on the choice.

Another conclusion is that a change of the name of the profession is required, since in Hebrew the word for the profession of the kindergarten teacher is identical to the word for the profession of a gardener, who works in a garden. The idea was adopted from the German educator Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel, who established in 1837 in Germany the first kindergarten. He compared children to plants, in that it is necessary to cultivate both. The idea was good, but research indicates that the term in Hebrew also encompasses caregivers in daycare settings and assistants. In Israel the term has become a name for all people who work with children aged zero to six, regardless of their training. The semantics has influence, and like the name of the department was changed from the Early Childhood Department to the Primary Education Department and thus became a part of the entire education system: primary education, elementary education, and secondary education and is not separate from it, the degree of the kindergarten teacher needs to be similar to that of the teacher. Kindergarten teachers have a degree in education and a teaching certificate. A teacher in the elementary school, a teacher in the middle school, and a teacher in the high school are all called teachers, and the age group for which the teacher is trained is a part of the title. So the kindergarten teachers in Israel, like the kindergarten teachers throughout the world, need to be called a teacher as well, a primary education teacher. This is a semantic change, the application of external cosmetics, but only both an external and an internal change together will bring about the change of the image.

3. Recommendations for Future Research

The present research study examined the image of the kindergarten teacher in the eyes of first year students, third year students, and academic re-training program students. The findings indicate a significant decline in the image during the studies. To understand this issue and to prevent it, it is necessary to examined in a focused manner the image of the profession of the kindergarten teacher in the population of students in a wider manner, ranging from the first weeks of the studies, through the middle group, year 2 students, to the end of the training. A comparative research study should be carried out between groups (or colleges) that will have contents on the topic of the image and a group that will not, and then it will be possible to learn about the contribution of the intervention and the way of the intervention.

In this research study the participating population was mainly from the state and state religious education sectors, which are very similar in their reference to the role and image of the kindergarten teacher. Therefore, the hypothesis on the differences according to the level of religiosity was not found to be significant. From the present research study it is not possible to learn about the Ultra-Orthodox sector, where there are also men who teach early childhood education, in the framework of the *cheder*, the traditional educational setting for young children in which the Hebrew language and the basics of Judaism are learned, and it is possible that this has implications on the image of the kindergarten teacher.

It is recommended to perform a similar research study that compares between the image of the kindergarten teacher in the Ultra-Orthodox education, state religious education, and state education.

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Appendix: The Research Questionnaire

Dear parent / kindergarten teacher / student,

I am a third student for a doctoral degree. In the framework of my studies I am conducting a research study on the image of the kindergarten teacher in Israeli society. You are asked to answer this questionnaire on your perception of the kindergarten teacher in the kindergartens in Israel.

The use of the term kindergarten teacher refers equally to women and men.

The questionnaire is anonymous. There is no collection of your email. All information is confidential.

Thank you for your help.

Fani

Background

1. What is your sex?

☐ Male
☐ Female

2. What is your age?

☐ Under 25
☐ 25-29
☐ 30-39
☐ 40-49
☐ 50 and above

3. What is your religion?

☐ Christian
☐ Muslim
☐ Jewish
☐ Druse
☐ Other: _____

4. How do you define your religious tendency?

☐ Religious
☐ Ultra-Orthodox
☐ Traditional
☐ Secular
☐ Other: _____

5. How your residential area considered in terms of socioeconomic situation?

☐ High
☐ Moderate
☐ Low

6. What is your education?

☐ High school
☐ Bachelor degree
☐ Master degree
☐ Doctoral degree
☐ Other: _____

7. You are filling out this questionnaire as a: (please note only one option)

☐ Parent of a child in the kindergarten
☐ Student for teaching in the kindergarten in the first year
☐ Student for teaching in the kindergarten in the last year
☐ Student for teaching in the program of training academically educated people to teach in the kindergarten
☐ Kindergarten teacher

8. If you are a parent of a child in the kindergarten, please answer the following question:

How many children do you have in the kindergarten?
☐ One
☐ Two
☐ Three

9. Do you know a kindergarten teacher personally, as a friend or family member?

☐ Yes
☐ No

10. If you are a kindergarten teacher, please answer the following questions.

How long have you worked as a kindergarten teacher?
☐ First year
☐ Two to five years
☐ Six to fifteen years
☐ Sixteen and more years

The area in which your kindergarten is found is in socioeconomic situation:
☐ High
☐ Moderate
☐ Low

Part 1

Section 1

To what extent do you think that …?	Extremely	Very Much	Moderately	Slightly	Not at All
The kindergarten teacher has management knowledge for kindergarten management					
The kindergarten teacher is equipped with management skills					
The kindergarten is managed according to clear and defined values.					
The kindergarten teacher manages the kindergarten in a value-based manner					
The kindergarten is presented in the media as the leader of an educational institution					
The kindergarten teacher is perceived in society as the manager of an education institution					

Section 2

	Extremely	Very Much	Moderately	Slightly	Not at All
The kindergarten teacher is featured in the media as an educator and educational leader					
The kindergarten teacher is a role model for behavior according to values					
The kindergarten teacher is seen in society as an educator and educational leader					
The kindergarten teacher knows a variety of educational methods and uses them wisely					
The kindergarten teacher has the skill required for educating children					
The kindergarten teacher influences the values of the kindergarten child and his family, such as environmental education					
Society recognizes the importance of the kindergarten teacher's role, as an educator and educational leader at a critical age in shaping children's education					
The people around me trust the kindergarten teacher and the way she/he chooses to educate the children in the kindergarten.					

The impact of kindergarten education is evident in the children's homes and community in the area where I live.				
The kindergarten teacher is shown in the media as equivalent to an elementary or high school teacher				

Section 3

The kindergarten teacher builds a customized curriculum for kindergarten; its content is relevant and meaningful.				
The kindergarten teacher is seen in the society as imparting knowledge and teaching like an elementary or high school teacher				
The role of the kindergarten teacher in learning is significant and forms the basis of knowledge for the learner in all areas of knowledge				
The kindergarten teacher has extensive knowledge in different fields such as language, mathematics, technology, and so on.				
The kindergarten teacher participates in in-service training and extends her/his knowledge.				
The kindergarten teacher is equipped with innovative technological skills tailored to early childhood and uses them as a tool for up-to-date learning				
The kindergarten teacher promotes 21st century skills in children like computer skills, research, and so on.				
The kindergarten teacher incorporates value learning in every subject and study activity in the kindergarten				
The kindergarten teacher knows a variety of educational methods tailored to early childhood.				

Section 4

The kindergarten teacher is valued in the society as having the ability to advise parents on how to deal with the difficulties and dilemmas related to children (kindergarten and home).				
The media presents the kindergarten teacher as a professional figure, who advises parents and helps solve difficulties with children at home and in the kindergarten.				

The kindergarten teacher is knowledgeable in educational counseling suitable for the children's age					
The kindergarten teacher has counseling and mediation skills in the children relationships					
The kindergarten teacher has counseling and mediation skills in the parent-child relationships					
The kindergarten teacher maintains transparency and discretion in her/his work with parents					
The kindergarten teacher gives equal and respectful treatment to parents and children					

Section 5

Proper nutrition and child hygiene in the kindergarten are the responsibility of the kindergarten teacher					
Kindergarten nutrition and hygiene are the primary role of the kindergarten teacher					
The kindergarten teacher has professional knowledge of safety, hygiene, and early childhood nutrition					
There is a clear distinction in the media between a kindergarten teacher, a caregiver, and an assistant					
There is a clear distinction in society between a kindergarten teacher, a caregiver, and an assistant.					

Part 2

The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the salary					
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the working conditions					
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of job security					
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the passion and love for the profession and the desire to influence					
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the low requirements of admission to academic studies					
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of its many					

vacations and suitability of the schedule for working mothers				
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of challenge and interest				
The kindergarten teacher chose the profession because of the desire to contribute to society				
I would like my children to choose the profession of a kindergarten teacher				

Part 3

Please rank the social status and prestige in society of the six professions, in your opinion. Please number from 1 to 6, when each number appears only one and 1 is the highest and 6 is the lowest.

☐ Doctor

☐ Lawyer

☐ High tech worker

☐ Career military person

☐ Teacher in elementary or high school

☐ Kindergarten teacher