Moral Resilience and Moral Courage among Students in Special Education and the Role of the Pedagogical Advisor: "I understood from you, that this is Our Job, to Let the Voice of those who can't Speak be Heard"

Nitza Shachar,  
Achva College of Education, Israel.  
E-Mail: nitzas@netvision.net.il

Lea Baratz,  
Achva College of Education, Israel.  
E-Mail: lbaratz@netvision.net.il

Abstract

This lecture aims to deal with the encounter between the pedagogical advisor and students qualifying in special education to form moral resilience. Most student-teachers chose special education for personal or family-related reasons. The research question examined how the relationship between special education students and their pedagogical advisor contributes to the development of their moral resilience. Twenty special education students in their last year of studies in two large colleges in Israel participated in this research. Data were collected using qualitative research tools: structured and partially-structured interviews, portfolios and field diaries of the students and of the researcher. The analyzing process identified themes in the students’ stories, which were divided into categories. The data reveals that the pedagogical advisor contributes to the development of moral resilience in the professional dimension, and also in the personal dimension as a model, and thus becomes a proximal persona of influence.
1. Resilience and Moral Resilience

In this study, we highlight the role of the pedagogical advisor as a figure and as a social-educational agent, involved in developing the humanistic values of students qualifying to teach in special education. We emphasize especially moral resilience, which is a state of mind that leads the students to act in a way which can be considered moral courage (Kidder, 2005). This article aims to complete the missing part in the research field, which deals with the encounter between the pedagogical advisor and the students, and helps them to form moral resilience.

We will first define the two elements which make up the concept moral resilience: moral and resilience. By moral, we mean values. Value education is influenced by the ideological point of view and social group's interests which impact the general educational process or individual values. Five principle features recur in most definitions of values: 1) Values are ideas or beliefs. 2. Values are connected to desirable goals or behaviors. 3. Values are universal and exist beyond specific situations. 4. Values enables assessment of events and behaviors. 5. There is a hierarchy of values according to their relative importance (Schwartz & Bislky, 1987)

In recent years, there has been rapid development in research on resilience (Herrman et al., 2011). Nevertheless, no single comprehensive definition has been found. There have been attempts to define resilience count in other disciplines, such as psychology, sociology and, recently, the field of genetics. Most of the definitions consider the sources of resilience to be associated with the personal, biological, and environmental aspects or a combination of all these factors, and they rely on associated terms such as mental resilience, communal resilience, and national-social resilience. The values and beliefs components of trainee teachers might strengthen during learning process (Baratz, 2015). This present article describes how trainee teachers perceived the role of the pedagogical advisor in empowering the moral strength of the students during the training process.

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2009) mentions ten strategies for building mental resilience: developing positive relationships, taking a different view of unsolved problems, accepting change as part of life, setting goals and pursuing them, acting with determination, seeking opportunities for self-discovery, believing in one's abilities, viewing things in perspective, maintaining hope, practicing self-preservation, and seeking additional ways to build personal resilience. The process of resilience building is an individual matter that combines elements derived from biology, the environment, and learning (Ogman, 2012). A resilient child uses mental activity and effective methods to cope with stress. (Rose & Fiitout, 2003). Resilience is described as resisting and opposing disturbance by standing one's ground and avoiding change without collapsing (Hobfoll, 2011). The starting point of the current work relies on the claim that moral resilience relates to the ability (of an individual or a group) to
remain steadfast in one's convictions when these are challenged. Thus, for example, a morally challenging situation might call into question certain fundamental values that enlighten people's behaviors, whether as individuals or as a group.

There is a connection between moral resilience and moral courage. Moral resilience is a state of mind while moral courage is an active situation in which there is an action based on endurance, risk and the understanding that, the action might be followed with consequences that can harm the good name and the wellbeing of the person who acts (Shachar & Baratz, 2015).

Miller (2000) defines moral courage as the willingness to take a stand in defense of principles or convictions even when others do not. Taking moral action requires one to know what the “right” judgment entails, as well as the fortitude to stand up in the face of adversarial conditions, requiring a sufficient level of moral courage, to overcome perceived threats while pursuing a moral purpose (Goud, 2005; Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007). Moral courage is thus crucial in linking judgments to ethical action under such conditions (Kidder, 2005).

Moral courage behavior occurs when individuals resist authority, assume individual responsibility, or take other morally courageous stands, even in the face of social ostracism or other forms of censure or punishment (Simola, 2015). Thus, the issue of potential punishment has importance while discussing moral courage. “Larger risks require greater moral courage, including the willingness to endure hardship to secure the welfare of others” (White, 2015, p.5).

Since, moral courage is “a prosaic behavior with high social costs and no (or rare) direct rewards for the actor”, (Osswald et al, 2010, p. 150), it can be identified that, ‘overcoming fear of social ostracism or rejection aims to maintain ethical integrity (Putnam, 2010).

Moral resilience comes to the forefront in situations that question pre-existing and accepted conventions, that is to say the beliefs that define one's (or a group's) understanding of what is right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate. Moral resilience is manifested when there is a sense of commitment and the willingness to act according to these conventions. Often, a major component of moral resilience is a feeling of communality and solidarity, which may lead one to assume responsibility and look after those who are under one's care (Ofer, Rix, & Harel, 2008). One way to understand and identify moral resilience is by describing its opposite, i.e. by considering scenarios that juxtapose complex moral issues with weak personal ethics and then analyzing the manner in which the person handles the situation (Ofer, Rix, & Harel, 2008).

Studies of teacher resilience at the pre-service level are limited. Only a few studies have examined teachers' resilience in general or their moral resilience in particular (Mayer, 2014). It is acknowledged that the resources teachers use to enable resilience are influenced by life experience and career stage. Most teachers believe that it is important to help students to develop personal attributes such as resilience so they can cope with the challenges and changes
of contemporary society. Nevertheless, teachers and students are caught up in the demands of the curriculum and the stress of exams rather than attending to the development of personal values (Mansfield, et al., 2012).

There seems to be agreement that teacher education may play a critical role in the resilience process (Baratz, 2017). Efforts to increase the quality of teaching and raise standards of learning and achievement for all pupils must focus on efforts to build, sustain and renew teacher resilience (Day & Gu (2014). These efforts must take place in initial teacher training. A key aim of resilience pedagogy must be to support individuals as they develop resilience capabilities for themselves.

Resilience involves the capacity of an individual teacher to empower personal and contextual resources to navigate through challenges. Teacher trainees may develop capacity for resilience through building personal resources (e.g. motivation; social and emotional competence), (Day & Gu, 2014; Johnson et al., 2014). They also develop ways of understanding how to use contextual resources (e.g. relationships and support networks), and to activate a range of adaptive coping strategies (e.g problem solving, time management, maintaining work-life balance) in order to manage challenges with a view to maximising adaptive, resilient outcomes (e.g. commitment, job satisfaction, wellbeing, engagement.

A key aim of resilience pedagogy must be to support individuals to develop resilience capability for themselves. As part of this, it is essential for learners to explore the nature of their interrelationships with others and their capacity to maintain and enhance connections (Gu, 2014).

Research is lacking about the developmental factors of moral resilience among pre-school teachers.

According to a research among pre-service teachers (Baratz, 2017) moral resilience should be developed into an educational ideology that is expressed in the field, through curricular functions, particularly through covert functions such as modeling and functions that serve to inculcate values in a manner unrelated to time, place, or approach. This notion highlights the connection between the factors of personal characteristics, self-efficacy and individual resistance (Bandura, 1997). The individual’s web of social affiliations and personal characteristics are meaningful and are responsible for future actions in a social framework.

**The Pre-Service Special Education Students**

Choosing teaching in special education stems almost entirely from intrinsic motivating factors (Tangala & Marginet, 2007). The attributes characteristic of the special education teacher as described in research literature are: great commitment, creativity, flexibility, steadfastness in face of the unexpected, patience, tolerance, sensitivity, and empathy towards
others and desire to give, readiness to see work as a challenge and a goal, ability and readiness to invest physical, intellectual and emotional effort in hard
In addition, complex work (Avoudi & Dangur, 1992).

The motivation of students who choose special education as the preference subject of their studies is discussed by Hillel-Lavian (2008, 2013). The majority hold a rather personal approach to special education, due to personal and family difficulties; the factor of individual or family differences (siblings or parents) was the strongest and most prevalent finding. This factor emerged in the personal histories of most of the participants as a motivating factor in choosing special education.

Some of the participants commented on the influence of crucial figures that had been models with whom to identify. Some mentioned their parents while others considered their special teachers who were role models for them (Hillel-Lavian, 2008). Special education teachers made a conscious decision, which fell into place during the course of their lives, to dedicate themselves to emotionally demanding work that involves giving daily assistance to societies weakest and most vulnerable (Gavish and Friedman, 2001). The most ideological reason seems to be as Hillel-Lavian (2013) noted “Seeing Special Education as more meaningful than regular education” (p. 22). Breunig (2005) presented the students’ strong motivation to develop better teaching skills, and a stable foundation of reciprocal relationships with their teachers and advisors.

Our research focuses on pre-service special education students recognizing conflictual situations in which they act in accordance with their ethical and moral positions. In these actions, they demonstrated moral resilience. We tried to find the sources of this resilience.

**The Relationship between the Pedagogical Advisor and Students**

The pedagogical advisor is a professional experienced teacher who is a faculty member of the academic staff in teacher training programs (Bar-Ziv, 2009). She bridges between the educational, instructional theories and the practice. In addition, the advisor’s main goal is to teach general pedagogical principles, in order to build a deep understanding of contents of disciplines, and to enlarge knowledge of the complexity of the characteristics of various pupils with special needs. The pedagogical advisor accompanies the student in their experience in schools and kindergartens (Shachar, 2015). She is responsible for the appropriate implementation of the didactics principles in the teaching process in the classes. It is her responsibility to assess the students during their first professional steps. Pedagogical advisors play a significant role throughout the teacher training process, particularly when they succeed in developing a process of cooperation and trust with their trainees (Kass & Rajuan, 2012). The pedagogical advisor is familiar with the tools, which the trainees will need to fulfill

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Use of the feminine throughout should be taken as include the masculine.

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their roles well, and she imparts them with her expertise and helps them to self-establish their personal and professional educational identity. The desire is to enable the pre-service student to fulfill the self-professional potential (Flaviane & kass, 2015).

Among the roles of the pedagogical advisor is to act as a ‘guard dog’, which means confronting a wide perspective of the qualification process of the students, such as to enable a correct relationship with the staff in schools or kindergartens where the students are gaining experience (Shachar, 2015). The advisor also establishes norms and borders, in order to ensure an appropriate relationship with the staff at school (Slick, 1998). Sometimes academic conflicts and dilemmas are raised and demand ethical and moral decisions (Shachar and Baratz, 2015). Such decisions demands moral courage.

The goal of this study is to describe the linkage between relationship of special education students and their pedagogical advisor, and its contribution to the building of their moral resilience.

2. Methodology

The present research is an interpretive research. This is particularly suitable in cases where one tries to understand a phenomenon and reveal factors and motives that were not considered so important at the outset, and which in retrospect are likely to be revealed as central from the standpoint of the participants in the research and of the researchers (Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2015).

Our research question is how the relationship between special education students and their pedagogical advisor contributes to the construction of the students’ moral resilience.

Twenty pre-service special education students who were doing their practical training in kindergartens and in public schools were chosen based on the researchers’ professional acquaintance with them. Each of these students was confronting a kind of ethical dilemma during their experience in the field. Data were collected from several sources in order to keep triangulated sources and increase validity: a field-diary of one of the researchers, a portfolio that students were writing during their work, and end of year summary projects. At first we chose those students’ portfolios and interviewed them by partially-structured interviews.

The students that were chosen had finished their studies at least a one year before the interviews, so that the background does not include a working relationship. They selected the location for the interview, making sure that it was suitable and free of distractions. They were asked to describe a personal experience or incident, which put them into a moral dilemma, and forced them to act courageously. They also had to answer about the motives for their actions. Data collected were recorded, in order to ensure their precision and entirety. In the stage of data analysis, re-interviews were made in order to get answers that were more specific.
The first stage of the inductive analysis included revelatory reading of the content by each one of the Researchers separately, in an attempt to find statements which refer to interaction between the students and pedagogical advisor. At this stage, each of the researchers reviewed the data sequentially, separately, to provide a broad and encompassing orientation, while keeping in mind the context in which the data were embedded. Then we reread the interview scripts together a number of times in order to identify and focus on recurring themes (Shkedi, 2010). We used a strategy of continuous comparison (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) in identifying within the stories situations of dilemma, where the interviewees knew that they were expected to act in a certain way, but instead acted in another. During this stage, all the data were read in sequence, to obtain a broad and general sense of the connections between the various concepts and motifs embedded in the data (Shkedi, 2010). Then we analyzed each story according to these themes, which we divided into categories.

3. Findings

The special education students described conflicts and dilemmas that arose during their practice teaching and presented ways of coping with them. The major finding we shall focus on pertains to the role of the pedagogical advisor, who accompanies the practice teaching in the field and contributes to the development of this moral resilience.

The data reveals two aspects of the centrality of the pedagogical advisor in the development of resilience - one personal and one professional.

The Personal Dimension

In the personal dimension the advisor acts as a model who support making moral decisions and helps building creed according to her values system.

1. The Advisor as a Model

Shiran

Shiran risked her final practice year in a class of children with mental retardation by going behind the principal's back and urging the class teacher to tell the parents of an intelligent boy that he is studying in class of children with retardation simply because of budget-related administrative considerations. When asked how she had found the courage to do this she said:

*I shared it with you (as pedagogical advisor). You had a great influence on me, also as a person... I knew you wouldn’t be angry. I knew that if you found out, you might pat me on the shoulder. However, when you have someone behind you who thinks as you do, and since I knew you, I knew that you would have done the same thing yourself. Perhaps that made it easier for me to decide to act as I did.*

Shiran reveals three aspects of the advisor's attitude toward what she did: the advisor conveyed a creed obliging one to take action; encouragement that was felt, even if it was not verbally explicit. Shiran expressed a conscious identification with the advisor's view of the act which of
necessity led her to actually doing it. Shiran mentions her confidence that the counselor herself would have done the same thing.

Shiran offers another reinforcement of her belief later on:

*It connects to something else. In one of the courses, the lecturer keeps saying that studies show that the teacher's personality is what influences the pupils most.*

**Danielle**

Danielle is a student who even before her practice year, defended a pupil at a staff meeting contrary to the position of the professional staff who had dismissed the student. When asked where she found the courage to do so she said:

*You gave me the legitimization to do it. Legitimization that I understood from you, that this is our job, even before teaching in the classroom, to stand there and let the voice of those who can't speak be heard.* *(message)*

*You gave me support, even though it was virtual.* *(support)* *This means that I need to make my voice heard, because it is not for me. It is for the children, and I have your full support. You gave me strength. There were occasions when I was afraid to speak, but you taught me not to be afraid, because what interests you is your students. When you stand in front of us and argue and defend us vis-à-vis the staff, I see that the frame you have in mind – is us! I see your job, with all the passion and desire, without being politically correct. You think about your goal – to lead all of us to safe waters.* *(modeling source)*

*The article that affected me the most was about conflicts* *(theoretical support)* *, but you were an example for me. It was you!* *Everyone wants to have at least one figure in their life* *(generalization)* *. I talk about you a lot with my mother and my boyfriend. My grandmother and mother are proud of me*” *(sentence representing a transition from advisor to self)*.

*When I sat down with the principal and the staff – you were echoing in my ears. I felt you were there with me, and I am grateful for that.*

Danielle explicitly mentions resilience that derives from observation of the actions of the advisor. She mentions that just as the advisor defends her and her fellow student's vis-à-vis the college staff, so she defends the pupil vis-à-vis the school staff. Danielle is imitating the behavior she perceives to be moral and proper.

Like Shiran, Danielle mentions the legitimization from the advisor - virtual backing – as she internalized it from her interaction with the advisor. She emphasizes that beyond theoretical studies, how to handle professional conflicts and find a moral solution, the figure of the advisor, as a persona is the actualization of the theory. Moreover, Danielle generalizes an important pedagogical principle about the centrality of seminal figures in shaping professional identity in
education. It is interesting to note the transition from the professional context to that of family, the expansion of the influence of the figure of the advisor beyond the learning situation, and the pride of Danielle’s family in her actions. The backing of the advisor intensifies and becomes backing for her immediate personal environment.

The Professional Dimension

The advisor represents the closest authority encountered by the students. We found that her authority was expressed in many areas: her authority in meetings with teachers in the field, and the authority in her conduct within the setting of the college, and her theoretical support.

a) Authority in the Practice Teaching Arena

Very often during the practice year, the student is at a juncture in which she has to cope with different forces between the coaching teacher and the advisor. This is particularly difficult when contradictory messages are being sent. The student is actually a guest in the preschool or in the class, and has no authority to act, unless authorized to do so by the coaching teacher, and in accordance with the demands dictated by the college. At these fault lines, she clings to her source of authority – the pedagogical advisor, who represents the college and the value messages she conveys to her student.

Moran

During her practice teaching in a preschool of children with severe disabilities, Moran noticed that for some time the teacher hadn’t taught the children anything new. She understood that this did not concur with the definition of the role of the preschool teacher, as she had understood it at the college. She had a dilemma:

*I didn’t know what to do. I was in a difficult situation, a dilemma: should I say anything to her or not. I came to you for help. You gave me the courage to go and tell her. In the end, I needed an authoritative figure who understood the system to give me the confidence to act.*

The advisor is no longer just a figure to be identified with, but also a lifebelt. Another courageous way of acting was when Moran told the advisor that the teacher gave the staff permission to tie a boy to a chair. Moran decided to go over her head about this.

*Something was burning inside me! But what could I do? I was just a student!!*

Moran told her pedagogical advisor, who then spoke to the preschool teacher and to the inspectorate.

*Here it was even worse – because I involved an outside entity! I did not go directly to them – I went ‘upstairs’ – outside.*

Moran reported it, even though such a report might be considered a betrayal. In fact, she had no authority to act, because she was still a student. However, she judged the teacher’s actions according to the standards she had learned from the advisor. Therefore, in the act of courage
supported by moral resilience, awareness and a perception of the advisor as an authority, she took a stand and was proactive.

b) Authority in the College Context

Student who chose to act were aware that their action might have consequences for their studies as well as on the emotional level. They expressed concern as well as emotional turmoil.

Moran

I came home and fell apart; it affected my life in general. Sadness, perhaps, not depression, but I came home very sad, irritable, and unsure, why – instead of shutting up – was I getting into trouble?

Moran’s words show the heavy emotional price an act of courage might extract from a student, and this reinforces the importance of the backing of the college.

Yaniv

Yaniv confronted a teacher who chose to have a ‘disruptive' pupil sit behind a screen, separated from his classmates.

He was blocked, so as to prevent eye contact with the rest of the pupils in the class. She claimed that he incited everyone and didn’t let her teach… In my lessons I didn’t use the screen and when the teacher heard this she confronted me as if I was damaging something she was trying to build… undermining authority… I was worried that she would harm my studies, my degree … she could give me terrible feedback, and make my life miserable.

Nevertheless, Yaniv decided to take action. He said he received support from the college. Yaniv’s concern was for both the immediate and the long term. He was aware of the power relations between himself and the teacher, of her ability to disrupt his teacher training. In the immediate term, she might hurt his functioning and his feelings during the practice teaching through negative feedback and through inappropriate personal treatment, which might damage his professional future. He reported to his superiors. He received confirmation that his studies would not be affected, and was asked to adjust his behavior to avoid direct confrontation with the coaching teacher, and was assured that they would inform the administration about it.

The advisor gave me support and by the head of the program that what I was doing was right and proper … At their recommendation, I did not work directly against the teacher. At the end of the year, a letter was sent to the school administration.

The intervention of the advisor contributed to the sense of resilience in that she strengthened Yaniv’s moral efficacy and encouraged him for the continuation of his studies.

Another example portrays the advisor as an authority who provides emotional backing and regulates anxieties.
Mariana

Mariana decided to teach middle school pupils a different program to the one the teacher asked for. She identified abilities in the pupils that the teacher had ignored.

*My aim was to develop a literate learner who can turn to sources of information on his own...I created a learning environment for them and they did the learning on their own. It gave them the power to understand that they can enrich their knowledge by themselves, and that it is not just the adult or the teacher who has the knowledge but that they can find that knowledge from other sources on their own.*

What annoyed her was:

*She was belittling and lowering them, she indirectly closed doors for them.*

The clash between the student and her coaching teacher was inevitable:

*She decided to show me that she was the teacher and I was the student. She criticized condescendingly and said that she had already failed another student, to show me how much power she had... I decided not to give in and show that I do not work for her.*

This brave decision came at a price:

*From then on, she simply looked for opportunities to tell me how bad I was, how much she disliked the lesson, that I had overloaded the pupils, that I had given them too much freedom. I continued to teach at a high level and didn’t pay attention to her...*

The result in terms of the pupils:

*They understood that they could produce something on their own! Today we live in a world rich with knowledge that does not come from people, they can use knowledge critically; they can be literate.*

Of course this situation in which a student is in the same arena as the coaching teacher and acts contrary to her method, which undervalued the pupils’ capabilities, might harm her both emotionally and administratively.

*I had the confidence I got from you. That’s why I could act not out of fear or concern... If I hadn’t had that confidence I would have been worried about my grade, and would not have been sure about passing the year.*

The student stresses that in addition to emotional encouragement, she received backing for her way of teaching.

*As some point I wanted to leave, because I didn’t want to see her any more, and you, as the advisor, urged me to stay there despite her objections and attempts to make me fail... There was something in you that encouraged me to fight. Perhaps another advisor might have told me ‘you are in a system, learn to function in it, and learn to listen to your superiors’, and then I wouldn’t have acted like that.*
The backing and confidence do not derive solely from the advisor's role as an authority, but also from her personality and the way she understands the system. Thus it seems that in addition to being a model of proper conduct, the advisor gives the student-teachers backing with virtual or actual support for their courageous actions, and perhaps the resilience derives from the knowledge that this close authoritative educational figure reinforces such actions and that one may turn to her for emotional as well as administrative support.

c) Theoretical Support

Moral resilience, as expressed in the student comments also derives from the theories they studied as part of their training at the college. For student in the special education track, humanistic theories are highly important.

Adi fought for a girl with disabilities when her coaching teacher removed the girl from a ceremony she was organizing. She knew that this act might endanger her practical year since the teacher had the authority to write up a report. She mentioned that what encouraged her to fight anyway was:

... a combination of my character, and also the principles that I learned at the college from Freire's theory about the weak and oppressed in society.

Anat said she has experienced a challenging learning process herself, following which she was able to challenge a group of developmentally slow preschoolers and teach them a complex learning process based on investigation and discovery. When she decided to teach them about the three states of matter, the teacher doubted that the children would be able to learn or that Anat would be able to teach the topic. The teaching assistants also belittled and insulted her for wanting to "turn the children into professors". Anat held her ground and changed the belief system of the preschool staff.

I found out that the principle of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development does not appear in isolation, but rather affects and challenges not just the children but also me as a student (the pedagogical advisor challenged me and backed me up throughout the teaching-learning process).

Edna intervened on behalf of an unpopular boy in the class. Thanks to her it was eventually discovered that the boy was suffering physical abuse from his father. She explains that she understood it was her duty to report to the teacher and to the administration because the school staff was completely ignoring him and his distress.

Following the article by Clodi Tal (2010) about emotional wellbeing and meaningful learning, I told the advisor and my fellow student-teachers what I had done, and I asked them to keep quiet about it until the end of the year.
4. Discussion

The findings of our study reveal the centrality of the pedagogical advisor for building moral resilience of special education pre-service teachers when they encounter crises, which arise as dilemmas during their practice year. Practical work in special education settings by definition gives rise to ethical dilemmas. Sometimes the dilemma is between choosing a passive approach of taking no action for self-preservation, and an altruistic proactive approach that might endanger the student's professional and emotional world.

Our study shows that the advisor is a persona that constitutes a source of empowerment when it comes to choosing to be proactive. Her influence is both as a moral educational role model and as a formal authority, because she stands between the college and the schools. The advisor's modeling role includes legitimizing actions that would not be taken without her support, building a creed that demands action, and strengthening the student's professional identity. Moreover, the advisor provides the emotional support the students need in their confrontations with the teachers in the field. Her optimistic approach is an emotional resource that is necessary to strengthen the student's moral and emotional world. This optimism is revealed in two ways. First, there is someone to rely on, in the sense of confidence and protection when they act. Second, as mentioned by Seligman (2002) and Yair (2006), there are educational figures whose vision illuminates into the distant future. It seems that such might be the figure of the pedagogical advisor.

The crises that the special education students encounter are diverse. They range from intervention on behalf of one child to intervention on behalf of a group of learners. Sometimes the student assesses the capabilities of pupils in a class to be high, while the classroom teacher undervalues the abilities of the pupils and lowers expectations. Sometimes the student encounters situations in which he or she believes a special education pupil is being mistreated by omission, rejection, covert violence or preclusion of basic rights of equality and emotional wellbeing. Students facing an educational authority will find it hard to act alone. They will need professional support from someone who is on their side. With the help of the advisor, the students can construct their educational philosophy, and benefit from her assistance as backup for a teaching method that differs from that suggested by the class teacher.

Thus, the students sometimes put at risk their professional reputation, their reputation in their community, their college scores, and their peace of mind. The interviewees' comments show that the figure of the pedagogical advisor is a lifebelt for them, or a kind of lighthouse beacon.

Evidence that the advisor is an educational role model for special education students can be found in observable overt processes, as well as in covert psychological ones. Overtly, the students witness the advisor's conduct as she fights for them in whichever setting her
Intervention is required vis-a-vis the college administration, the coaching teacher or the school principal. This conduct teaches the students about responsibility and about when to mark boundaries, where to insist on values and principles and what is their ethical obligation in special education. She indicates what is permissible and what is not – for them, for herself, and for the teachers in the field.

At the covert level, the students absorb human values from the advisor, which derive from pedagogical theories. Students are introduced to the critical theory of Paulo Freire (1981), who calls for the liberation of the 'oppressed', and to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory that provides a critical view to what level one can stretch one's pupil's cognitive skills. According to Vygotsky, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the distance between the learner's current and potential level. The students learn about maximizing pupils' potential when they try to maximize their own academic and moral potential vis-a-vis the advisor and her high demands. They learn to look at scholastic difficulties with an approach of optimism and broadening of horizons according to Feuerstein (2006), and they discover caring according to the approach of Noddings (2003, 2007). These theories influence the advisor herself, and her education mindset. Thus, the students absorb not only the modeling but also the core of special education: caring, standing up for the pupil's right to challenging learning content, to equality in education, to study that enables them to develop autonomy in managing their lives, and their right to be literate, and above all, their right to basic respect as human beings.

Just as the Kohlberg (1987) system is constructed through encounters with the environment, moral resilience will not develop without contact with one's human environment; and just as all human change is affected by both distal and proximal factors (Feuerstein, 1988) it occurs also with the individual's value system, including moral resilience. The proximal factors in the context of moral resilience are one's innate personality traits together with environmental factors, particularly one's immediate family. Among the more distal factors, we may find the educational settings where a person studied, social factors, and political affiliation. Taplin (2011) stresses that mental resilience is primarily based on organic-faith foundations, values and skills deriving from one's own personality. Subsequently we find that in addition to family ties as affecting resilience, there is also importance to school, to the immediate community and society in general. We assume that the culture in which the students grew up and the organic sources they bring with them play a primary role in building resilience during childhood. Hence, we will relate to these personality and family factors as proximal. At the same time the educational system and the figures who represent it can be considered as distal factors.

Later on in life the impact of the family and the educational system are transformed. The encounter with the significant figures in college or university provides the student new ideas, new values which support the process of building the personal and professional
resilience. It turns out that an element that strengthens the primary sources of resilience can be found in the student teachers' organizational framework, particularly their encounter with seminal figures (Yair, 2006) such as the pedagogical advisor. This encounter takes place either at the college or during the practice teaching, and is a central empowering factor in the process of strengthening resilience as part of the student teachers' professional development.

Figure 1

Our study reflects a different order of distal and proximal factors. As Figure 1 illustrates there is a change in their order of appearance and their relations with the individual/student. There is no doubt that personality is a key factor in the student's ability and tendency to develop moral resilience. However, the closest human factor that affects the development of resilience, particularly in education, is probably the pedagogical advisor, who becomes a proximal factor. It is from her that the students learn to observe their surroundings critically; it is from her that they learn critical and humanistic theories of education. The advisor is who influences them as a persona, with her attitudes, experience and behavior. The advisor's caring approach influences the students, especially when it is backed up with the caring theory of Noddings (2003, 2007).

The family members used to be the first social source for forming the student's values system. In the educational process of the students' professional development, the family attains a different meaning for the students, and it is likely that the advisor stands as a front figure. In light of the fact that the place of the advisor is so central and meaningful for the development of moral resilience among special education students, first of all advisors should be aware of this and include moral educational aspects in their ongoing educational discourse with the pre-service students. This open dialogue will allow the students to turn to the advisor in crisis's times or when they have a dilemma. This kind of dialogue will enable the students to find the
support that leads to emotional catharsis, as well as a confidence that might free them to act with moral courage. Even when the advisor is not around, the moral resilience will be internalized, and the students will be able to act with an awareness of moral courage. As S. Izhar (1990) states: *In modern society one cannot teach values, one must develop in the individual the ability and the freedom to choose values that suit different situations and roles*.

In addition, we maintain that moral motivation and moral action can also be developed through training.

**Reference**


