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## Abstract

Darca is committed to increasing social mobility by improving the learning opportunities that students from Israel's geosocial periphery benefit from. With the professional jobs market changing at a rapid pace due to technological and social innovation, it is imperative that the connection between high school education and professional success be well understood.

To this end, Darca Schools partnered with Tel Aviv University's Career Development Lab, to conduct an extensive research study seeking to address this very connection. Through comprehensive interviews with successful Darca Schools graduates, the Tel Aviv University research team collected data that clearly highlights Darca graduates attribute much of their development and success to their high school years.

Furthermore, it identifies that their Darca schools' framework of values, educational practices and emotional support served as the engine to this successful development. Therefore, the study's data illuminate invaluable findings that should lead as the foundations to strengthen and improve schools in their effort to increase their students' social mobility.

**A follow-up study yielded evidence that shows this same group of Darca graduates overwhelmingly feel they are optimally positioned relative to their peers from other schools, including schools in central affluent communities.** They perceive themselves as better-positioned than their peers in their professional lives, academics, social contributions, and recreation. A summary of these findings can be found in the executive summary below, followed by the long-form studies themselves.

## Summary of the Research Report

While rapid social and technological changes have led to a rise in quality of life and to high accessibility to knowledge and information, they have also **intensified the challenges that compromise social mobility**. When once one could expect a secure labor market offering long-term employment, the reality now is a fluid market characterized by frequent changes, requiring employees to take responsibility for their professional development, to respond to changing conditions, and to be aware of their rights. Those entering the labor force not having benefited from the proper resources are vulnerable and stand to be left behind.

In response, the academic field has published studies pointing to the fact that education, and specifically **career education, can serve to effectively address these challenges**. For example, in an introductory essay of a 2019 special issue on career education, Cinnamon, Hardin and Flum explain how education is seen as a vital contributor and accelerator of economic development, and as a key factor in the effective management of these changes throughout a person's work-life. Even the public sector has acknowledged the critical role of education in addressing this developing challenge. The recently published Israeli State Comptroller's Report argues that "to prepare its graduates for successfully functioning in their future lives, the education system must implement among its students, alongside knowledge and values, also the skills they will need as adults in their social, personal and professional lives in the 21st century."

To this end, the OECD launched the Future of Education and Skills 2030, a flagship project that aims to, among other important goals, produce students with the ability to successfully navigate the labor force of the 21st century. **These publications, projects and developments all point to a clear and urgent need.**

Over the last decade, Darca Schools has built an educational network that serves as an excellent platform to furnish its more than 24,000 students with the skills to lead successful lives after graduation. Darca's wide reach, and the socioeconomic background its students come from, make it imperative that it do so - for youth from Israel's underserved communities, and for the health and prosperity of the Israeli state. For this reason, **Darca partnered with the Tel Aviv University Career Development Lab, to conduct a research study that examines the trajectory of successful Darca graduates and the factors that promote the development of Darca graduates who function successfully in their personal, social and professional lives**. The goal was to identify these factors through scientific method, so as to inform and enhance Darca's work in promoting increased social mobility amongst its student population coming from Israel's geosocial periphery.

## Summary of the Research Report, continued

### Method

The Tel Aviv University research team consisted of two expert researchers from the career education field, one research assistant who helped with the data processing and analysis and a leading researcher who supervised and monitored the data analysis process.

The Darca network sent out an invitation to its alumni, through the schools' alumni coordinators, calling for prospective research study participants. Thirty Darca graduates leading successful lives that met the study's rigorous criteria were identified and selected to participate in the study. After interviews with twenty-two of them, the research team agreed ample qualitative data was collected, and that further interviews would not serve to shed any new light on the subject matter. Therefore, the study was conducted with twenty-two participants. They are between the ages of 19-29 and come from seven different Darca schools. Most of the participants - 90.5% ( $n=19$ ) - are studying in higher education (during the study or just before), with 57.9% ( $n=11$ ) of those studying scientific degrees such as engineering, computer science and medicine. Most of the graduates ( $n=16$ ) combine a steady job, held between several months and 3 years, with their studies.

The Tel Aviv University research team conducted 1-hour semi-structured interviews with each of these graduates. These interviews included three anchor questions:

1. Tell us about yourself
2. Describe your study experience at your Darca high school
3. Describe your plans for the future.

And further discussion that helped assess the learning experience of the Darca network alumni was encouraged.

The interviews were analyzed according to the recommended guidelines of a qualitative research method - Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR). The analysis identified themes, categories and sub-categories that received notable and repeated mention as strong factors that helped graduates lead successful lives. Subsequently, the team reviewed the transcripts, extricating relevant quotes for each of the agreed upon themes. The team worked through contradictions and fundamental disagreements related to those themes, until they reached agreement about their definition. All along, they focused on narrowing down, changing or removing categories and sub-categories, using the grounded theory method and the constant comparative method, until final themes, categories and sub-categories were agreed on.

Two major themes identified were:

1. **Graduate Profile** - the character traits indicative of a successful future life.
2. **Educational Framework** - the school traits that serve as a jumping-board for students' and graduates' healthy and successful development.

## Summary of the Research Report, continued

These themes, together with the categories and sub-categories identified within these themes, are organized into tables found below. Following the tables and a brief description of a follow-up study that was conducted, for each sub-category, this executive summary provides a brief definition, as well as a select quote from the graduate interviews which best captures the concept.

Darca plans to present these findings to its schools' leadership and educators, and explore how they can be tailored and implemented to best serve the unique needs and vision of each school.

Graduate Profile		
Clear View of the Future	Life Style	Guiding Values
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drive and excellence</li> <li>2. Sense of belonging to the school</li> <li>3. Commitment to the community and giving to others (the will to do good and have impact)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Balancing different roles in life</li> <li>2. A role model</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Professional aspirations in the field of management, entrepreneurship and leadership</li> <li>2. "You and I will Change the World" (commitment to active citizenship)</li> </ol>

Educational Framework		
Guiding School Values	Educational Behavioral Practices	Emotional
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drive and excellence at school</li> <li>2. Supporting and recognizing the other</li> <li>3. Leadership and visibility</li> <li>4. Balancing different roles</li> <li>5. Faith in the student (educational self-efficacy)</li> <li>6. The student in a holistic view</li> <li>7. The teacher as expert</li> <li>8. Teaching as a calling</li> <li>9. Dedication to teaching</li> </ol>	<p><b>System Practices:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Small and familiar</li> <li>2. Supportive boundaries</li> <li>3. Teaching which is based on expanding horizons</li> <li>4. Social and community initiatives</li> <li>5. Fostering soft skills               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time management</li> <li>- Public speaking</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. "Competition as an obligation for group success"</li> <li>7. Reputation</li> </ol> <p><b>Management Practices:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involvement</li> <li>2. Open Door policy</li> </ol> <p><b>Educational Staff Practices:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Diverse experiences</li> <li>2. Critical thinking and pluralism</li> <li>3. Autonomy in learning the process</li> <li>4. "Give them a fishing rod, rather than fish" - nurturing good learning habits</li> <li>5. "Don't give up on anyone"</li> <li>6. "Seeing the person beyond the student"</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sense of belonging, family and friendship</li> <li>2. Happiness and fun</li> <li>3. Reciprocity</li> <li>4. Care, concern and love</li> </ol>

## Summary of the Research Report, continued

### Follow-Up Study

Following this central research study which illuminated the elements Darca's successful graduates identify as most essential to their positive development, Darca wanted to measure how these successful graduates perceived themselves in relation to their peers from other schools. Specifically, how they perceive themselves in their professional lives, academics, social contributions and recreation. The Tel Aviv University research team conducted a follow-up study using the same sample of participants, interviewing them to gain a clear picture on this. The core questions asked included:

1. How do you view your professional achievements compared to your peers?
2. How do you view your academic achievements compared to your peers?
3. How would you rate your community and social contribution compared to your peers?
4. How do you rate your ability to manage substantial recreational activity and leisure compared to your peers?
5. How would you rate your ability to combine successfully between all areas of life compared to your peers?

The participants rated how well-positioned they feel in each field, on a scale of 1-5. **The data indicate that consistently, some 70-80% of these graduates feel better-positioned and even much better-positioned in these fields as compared to their peers, including those from central affluent communities.**

Furthermore, the participants were all asked "to what extent do you attribute the capabilities which you have described above to the Darca school you attended?" The data show that 70% of them "to a very large extent" attribute this advantageous positioning to the Darca school they attended.

They reinforced this with enthusiastic language, including the following selected quotes:

"Thanks to school and the feeling that somebody believes in me and does not give up on me, I have made it to where I am today. In retrospect, that period shaped me, both personally and as I can see today - also professionally."

"I thank Darca so much, I went through a significant transformation which shaped me and allowed me to acquire many tools that assist me until today, both personally and professionally."

To read more in-depth into this research study and its findings, please refer to **Appendix 2**.

# Summary of the Research Report, continued

## Findings from the Central Tel Aviv University Research Study

### Graduate Profile

#### Guiding Values

Graduates of the Darca network described in their stories clear values that indicate a cohesive self-identity, mentioned in relation to personal, social and cultural contexts in their lives.

**Drive & Excellence:** The graduates described an effort aimed at making progress, succeeding and standing out in terms of productivity in the academic and occupational spheres of their lives.

*"I can tell you that I am stubborn with regards to my success... and I never give up. I always make an effort. I am not afraid to fail sometimes, always do my best to meet my goals."*

**Sense of Belonging to the School:** The network's graduates stressed their profound and strong sense of belonging to the school. This was manifested through emotional elements like care, longing and good memories.

*"Last week I visited my former physics teacher. Just like that, on a Friday, I went to see him and check up on him. It was such fun, because... I still feel a sense of belonging to my high school."*

**Commitment to the Community and Giving to Others:** In their descriptions, the graduates highlighted a core value which is currently guiding them, which is commitment to the community and giving to others. They describe their will to "give back", to influence others and have impact, and see voluntary work as an inherent part of their daily life.

*"Volunteering is an integral part of my life. I have been volunteering since I was 13-14. I can't do without it... I volunteer... with youth at risk. I teach 7th-12th classes a variety of subjects they need help with (chemistry, physics, mathematics)."*

#### Lifestyle

**Balancing Different Roles in Life:** When participants talk about their core values, they emphasize another important aspect of their conduct, that is the ability to maintain and nurture a broad and rich life, combining a range of roles at work, studies, family, community and leisure.

*"Doing more in life, is something I took with me. This is why I still volunteer. I also work of course... I have been working for 4-5 years now... With regards to social life, it is very important to me. Studies are really important too, but for me, enjoying the experience too is incredibly important. I try to balance it all together."*

**A Role Model:** The graduates' stories reflect their ability to internalize the teacher's conduct and behavior as a role model. This developmental component has served as a moral compass and inspiration for the graduates.

*"He might have been my math's teacher, but he was much more than that, for me and for the whole class. I learnt so much from him, it's crazy how dominant this person is in terms of the meaning school had for me."*

## Summary of the Research Report, continued

### Clear View of the Future

Graduates were able to paint a very clear “day in their future.” In their description, they mainly mentioned professional managerial positions of an entrepreneurial and independent nature, and meaningful work, alongside exceptional community work to promote a “better world.”

**Professional Aspirations in the Field of Management, Entrepreneurship and Leadership:** The graduates’ plans for the future include ambitions for professional advancement which entail initiative, leadership and management capabilities in fields that are interesting and meaningful for them.

*“I wish for myself that in three years, I would have my own business, a start-up. That I would already be experienced. Even if it fails. At least I will have had the experience of founding something myself. Starting an independent business, doing the marketing myself. Everything it entails.”*

**“You and I will Change the World”:** Alongside their impressive professional aspirations, the graduates illuminate their stories with their drive for intensive and meaningful social and community volunteer work, that would potentially make their community and the whole world a better place.

*“A sense of calling is important for me, making an impact and advancing issues. It is not just about my own change or progress, but the environment and society as a whole, people, young people especially.”*

### **Educational Framework**

The graduates’ characteristics described above are explained in the interviews as a result of an educational framework consisting of a value system fostered by the school. These core values shaped the systemic, managerial, and pedagogical practices and nurtured a profound emotional experience among the graduates.

### Guiding School Values

**Educational Drive and Excellence:** The school actively sought to encourage academic achievements in the students. The graduates describe the many efforts by the school to foster motivation and nurture a drive to develop and excel, and the resources that have been allocated to developing academic excellence.

*“There were many signs everywhere [in the school] aimed at pushing us... that you have no limits, that there’s no limit to what you can do. That you should always try to reach your goals.”*

**Supporting and Recognizing the Other:** Alongside the value base described above, which puts excellence and drive in the center, the graduates spoke a lot about another prominent value, seeing the other and helping and giving back to the community. These values were also reflected both in the school as a system, and by the pedagogical staff personally.

*“I can say that my school raised the banner of excellence and giving back as its core values. Sensitivity to the other, excellence, giving back. And these were indeed the values I took away with me from school.”*

## Summary of the Research Report, continued

**Leadership and Visibility:** Another core value which stood out in the interviews was the significance given in school to activity which is based on leadership and visibility. Accordingly, priority was given to activities which offer the students a chance to experiment with entrepreneurship and with leading community, social and educational projects which have a wide-reaching impact.

*"There were many cases where I had to stand in front of an audience and speak... We had to do presentations in groups, at every class. We'd go out and discuss a topic we wanted to speak about. A presentation kind of like a TED talk... Come up with a topic and then stand on the stage at the auditorium, not in the classroom, and speak publicly."*

**Balancing Different Roles:** As mentioned, the graduates describe a wide and rich lifestyle based on a combination of different roles, including work, studies, family, community and leisure. In their stories, the graduates describe the beginnings of this lifestyle already in their school days at Darca schools.

*"Since school I learnt how to navigate between different activities that are important to me. Whether it's the army that takes up part of the day, or something else, I then think what I want to do with the rest of my day. So, I have the start-up where I work, and my studies. I also started playing the piano over a year ago. This way I manage to put everything I want to do in my schedule... and leave time for friends and TV and such things."*

**Faith in the Student:** Another key value that stood out in the graduates' stories was the sincere and persistent belief on behalf of school educators in students' ability to succeed in their studies. This aspect, according to the graduates, served as a solid basis for them to succeed and reach much higher achievements than they could hope for, continuing to provide confidence throughout their adult lives.

*"The teachers compliment you about every little thing... Even now, when I'm at peak stress, with three start-ups, presentations, and it's never ending, I remember that there were people who believe in me."*

**The Student in a Holistic View:** A central and crucial element in the policy and vision of Darca Schools is that teachers are involved, and they support students in their personal, social, familial and academic arenas.

*"I think the teachers really knew us. I think that at our school, many of us, including myself, spoke to the teachers about anything, and felt free to do so."*

**The Teacher As Expert:** One other crucial element of Darca schools, as reflected by the graduates' interviews, is professionalism. Graduates emphasized the fact that teachers have a relevant academic background in their field and that they teach from a place of up-to-date knowledge. It seems that this aspect gave the students a sense of confidence and trust and drove them to learn out of respect and appreciation for the teacher and the field.

*"One of the things that made me feel good at school was the quality of the teachers... There were many PhDs, as in almost every teacher was a doctor. It is not common to see that."*

## Summary of the Research Report, continued

**Teaching as a Calling:** Another essential component which was identified in the interviews refers to the fact that the educational staff is described as being on a mission, treating teaching as their calling. Accordingly, the teaching is driven out of love and personal connection to the subject matter, and more broadly to the teaching profession itself.

*"The teachers had passion for teaching, passion for their work. That means that the literature teacher actually loved literature. The maths teacher loved mathematics."*

**Dedication to Teaching:** Dedication to teaching is a central value of the teacher's image as it was reflected from the interviews. This was expressed by the time and effort invested by teachers, way pass the official school hours, in their spare time. They did this through tutoring, individual assistance and academic support.

*"My maths teacher always said 'if you have any questions about the homework write me on WhatsApp. Write page number, exercise number', and if I needed help - she really was available. She really did want us to succeed. She also used to add support tutorials to those who needed it twice a week. If she saw someone did not do well on their test, she'd say 'come to the tutorial. I'll sit with you.'"*

### **Educational Behavioral Practices**

The interviews revealed educational practices on the system, managerial and pedagogical levels to have been of high influence on the development and effective functioning of Darca's alumni.

#### ◇ System Practices

**Small and Familiar:** The study participants attached importance to the size of the school and talked about classroom numbers and student numbers in each classroom as parameters that created a pleasant (family-like) learning atmosphere and allowed for individual attention from the teachers, which promoted differential learning.

*"Our class was small. There were 20-22 students in our class. So it was very convenient. It's not like classes with 40 students, where you can't learn anything. This is also the advantage of the school... It contributes to a family atmosphere. It is also a lot easier to learn this way. Practically speaking. The teacher can actually give you attention."*

**Supportive Boundaries:** Another practice was the existence of supportive boundaries. Participants described a school atmosphere which included clear and consistent discipline. However, respondents pointed out that the discipline at the school was not "blind". Alongside boundary setting, there was a lot of flexibility according to the graduates, and adaptation of the school's response to the students' character and needs.

*"I would preserve the way my class teacher taught. She knew how to silence us without even raising her voice. This is something I took away with me. That's it. It is as if she showed authority and that was enough to scare us off so that we wouldn't even dare to speak during class."*

## Summary of the Research Report, continued

**Teaching Which is Based on Expanding Horizons:** Another practice to which study participants referred was the creation of opportunities for broadening horizons and enriching knowledge, beyond the immediate and formal curriculum. Graduates placed great importance on the ways in which this practice deepened their ability to imagine their near and distant future.

*"They brought a company or organization called VDC, who are entrepreneurs who train young people. We had actual workshops where we learnt how to develop products, how to present products and how to come up with good ideas. They have a market and all that. It was very interesting... I think it really helped us, because it opened us up to think innovatively."*

**Social and Community Initiatives:** Another school practice that stood out in the words of the study participants was the inclusion of initiatives and volunteering in the community, in a way that encouraged values of leadership and giving back, as mentioned above.

*"We had a mission to volunteer in our village, so I chose to volunteer in my kindergarten. And the teacher in charge of the project would always ask about it and follow up on it, and give us suggestions for activities we can do for these children."*

**Fostering Soft Skills:** It is evident from the interviews that the graduates attribute their personal successes to practicing soft skills such as planning, time management and standing in front of an audience. Dedicating resources to the advancement of these skills is in line with the ambitiousness that characterizes the schools.

*"I think that if there are goals... let's say if I set a certain goal for a certain date, when it is written in front of me, and it is clear in my head, I achieve it faster than I actually planned. This is an important skill in my opinion, and sometimes, at least at my age, people do not understand the importance of it. Which leads me to the next point, I feel this is something I definitely got at school. Something I would never have thought about on my own, without external guidance."*

**Competition as an Obligation for Group Success:** A school practice that was mentioned a lot was the encouragement of constructive and positive competition. Graduates spoke of a learning experience which fostered healthy competition between students - values of giving back and seeing the other were incorporated into this practice of competitiveness in a way that fostered a climate in which students felt a high sense of commitment to the success of their classmates.

*"We were a group who pushed each other. Why? Because at any given moment one of us could be down. But others who were on their best, so the school essentially functioned like a support group. If anyone was bad, the others cheered him up... We all did 5 units in every subject. We played football, basketball, we did all sorts of things."*

**Reputation:** The reputation of the school was mentioned substantially in the graduates' stories, mostly by Yarka graduates, as setting them up for success.

*"There was constant talk about the school. It was talked about as the best school, the best place, with the best learning atmosphere, and the best springboard for your career."*

## Summary of the Research Report, continued

### ◇ Management Practices

**Involvement:** The school principal was perceived by the graduates as being involved and engaged, both in overall educational processes in the school, and in terms of the daily lives of students. Moreover, the school principal's hands-on involvement is often described as an engine of personal growth for the students, during their studies and later in their adult lives.

*"I remember we had to do a young lawyers project, where we had to simulate a trial. There was one girl who was too shy, and didn't want to speak in front of a full auditorium. I remember that the principal really pushed her to do it, reinforced her and encouraged her, and didn't give up. The school principal really cares at the individual level. In a place like Lod, this is something that can change your life."*

**Open Door Policy:** Another popular practice involving the principal which came up a lot was his/her availability to students. This availability was dubbed by the graduates as an "open door policy" and was related in their interviews as a feeling that the school principal is always accessible and free to listen and assist in school matters or personal matters.

*"If I needed the principal, I could just walk in, knock on his door and come in and talk. As if he had a lot of spare time, although he was swamped with work. He had many meetings, and everyone wanted to see him, but he always made sure to have time for his students."*

### ◇ Educational Staff Practices - Pedagogical Expertise

**Diverse Experiences:** Graduates mentioned that learning at school was done through creating diverse experiences, from which the principles of the subject matter were derived. In a way which creates a personal connection of the students to the subject matter, encouraging investigation and personal research.

*"The teachers knew how to deliver the message. How to turn it into something tangible, although you can't really feel it. You cannot really feel Newton's Law. But at school, the teachers give you so many opportunities to ask, be curious, find out more - where does it come from? What is the origin of this law? So, it makes you really connect to it..."*

**Critical Thinking and Pluralism:** Another practice was nurturing critical thinking and pluralism. Respondents mentioned lively discussions in class which led to open mindedness and cognitive flexibility, which in turn led to a deeper comprehension of the subject matter. Furthermore, respondents pointed out that this practice improved their discussion skills, like forming an opinion, structuring an argument and tolerance.

*"Students would present a certain topic from their point of view, and it was fine to disagree. Legitimate. The teachers never said 'this is the correct view'. They want you to think about things from a different perspective. Look at them in a different light."*

**Autonomy in Learning Processes:** Participants spoke of their position within the study process at school. According to them, the teaching staff encouraged students to play an active role in value-based learning.

*"It was not just about teachers writing on the board. Not at all. There were videos and presentations, and activities. There was more room for students to express themselves. Our teachers gave us the stage all the time, as students. To say what we think, to participate. It was never a one-man show. It was not about a teacher giving a lecture. We were very curious, we wanted to speak and express ourselves, and the teachers welcomed that."*

## Summary of the Research Report, continued

**“Give Them a Fishing Rod, Rather than Fish”:** Participants addressed teaching practices which encouraged personal study. Graduates described how teachers always stressed the learning process, rather than the results, to allow for development of good study and research habits, for growth and improvement.

*“I think at that age, it is one of the most crucial things. To take initiative, develop and think for yourself. Not just be fed with a spoon, it is crucial in my opinion.”*

**“Don’t Give up on Anyone”:** The graduates’ interviews described educational staff that fight for every pupil in the school, striving to advance their academic achievements and help them realize the potential inherent in each and every one of them. According to them, this was a sweeping policy towards all students at the schools, and especially towards "difficult" students, or those with low motivation.

*“My teacher was an example of a teacher who fights for you. He didn’t let me run away. Whatever happens. He wouldn’t let me. He just wanted to continue. Today, I am grateful about it. An amazing teacher, really. I think a big part of where I am today is thanks to him.”*

**“Seeing the Person Beyond the Student”:** The graduates describe a holistic approach by the educational staff towards the students, an involvement and support by the teachers in all areas of students’ lives, beyond the academic sphere, including personal, family and social matters. This involvement is mainly mentioned in the context of crises and moments of distress typical of adolescence, and expressed in terms of emotional support and operative assistance.

*“This is something I really felt at school, in the hardest times, the busiest moments... I had days when I would leave the house at seven in the morning and come back at eleven at night, because I had a job, I volunteered, I had studies, tutorials marathons, and the teachers would see it and tell me, come in if you need a chat.”*

### **Emotional**

The values and practices described above, created positive emotions among the alumni, which helped shape their entire learning experience. These emotional aspects were described with respect to the school atmosphere and climate, towards the educational staff and the social age group.

**Sense of Belonging, Family and Friendship:** The source of this emotional experience, as described by the graduates, is the students' personal acquaintance with the administration, the teaching staff and the other students at the school, along with their sense of security that "there is someone you can rely on if needed."

*“There was a strong sense of belonging to the place. A sense of security. That the school really embraced me, that I had somewhere to turn if I needed anything. I emphasize the family element because it really did feel like family. That was how I experienced it. When I had any problem, I could easily ask for help.”*

**Happiness and Fun:** The learning experience at the Darca network schools, was described by participants as fun and happy. The conversation about their school years flooded the graduates with pleasant memories and longing, and some even called that period "my most beautiful years."

*“There were people at school whom it was just fun to meet every morning... you felt you wanted to be there. I was happy being there.”*

## Executive Summary

**Reciprocity:** Graduates also remarked about the unique emotional aspects of the relationships with their teachers. They described teachers' close interpersonal relationship with students, which was talked about in terms of sharing, reciprocity and even friendship.

*"I was connected to everyone, the principal and the teachers. They were really close to me. You didn't feel this distance between the principal and the students or teachers. There was real dialogue, even friendship sometimes, and it made it all much more fun and made us feel like coming to school and putting a lot of effort into our studies to develop ourselves."*

**Care, Concern and Love:** In their interviews, the graduates described pleasant memories of feeling cared for by teachers, and even feeling warmth and love. Some of them spoke of their relationships with the teachers as one would describe a relationship with a parent.

*"Care is the key word. They cared about us, they loved us, appreciated us and believed in us. They wanted us to succeed."*

### Conclusion

The research study data **clearly highlights that Darca graduates attribute much of their development and success to their high school years.** Furthermore, it clearly presents how their Darca schools' framework of values, educational practices and emotional support served as the engine to this successful development. Therefore, the study's data illuminate invaluable findings that should lead as the foundations to strengthen and improve schools in their effort to increase their students' social mobility.

# Research Report on

## The Foundations Accelerating Darca Graduates' Career Paths

### A Retrospective Assessment by the School Network's Alumni

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#### Introduction

The present study sought to investigate the study experience of Darca network graduates, in order to characterize the overall educational endeavor in the network's schools, with the aim of improving it. The aim of the study was to point out the factors that promote the development of graduates who function successfully in their personal, social and professional lives, as attested by the graduates themselves.

#### Current Trends in Education

Social and technological changes challenge traditional conceptions in education. Rapid developments in technology and information technology, globalization, and the proliferation and establishment of capitalism and neo-liberal ideologies in many economies, have shaken and reshaped the notion of institutionalized learning and education (Bonk, 2009). These changes have led to a rise in quality of life and to high accessibility to knowledge and information. However, these changes have also intensified some of the challenges in the world of work, such as inequality in the distribution of income between countries. This in turn has led to increased vulnerability of social groups that have limited access to formal education and fewer cultural resources to deal effectively with these rapid changes (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). The OECD project Future of Education and Skills 2030, launched in 2015, addresses these changes, as well as the critical role of the education system in developing approaches, values, knowledge and skills that will enable people to become involved individuals, engaged in the future world of the third decade of the 21st century.

'The Future of Education and Skills 2030' project aims to produce students who are able to shape their future, accept otherness and diversity and embrace it as a critical resource, as well as develop creative solutions to problems the world will face in the future. The project addresses the gaps between the world for which current education systems prepare their students and the future world, and aims to reduce these gaps in order to equip learners with the required skills to become **active, responsible and involved citizens**.

One of the gaps addressed by the project is in the world of work, which has undergone changes in recent years (Chin & Rasdi, 2014; Savickas, 2011, 2012), the most prominent of which is the transition from a secure market that provides long-term employment to a fluid market characterized by frequent changes (Bernstrøm et al., 2019). These changes require employees to be aware of their rights, responsible for their professional development and be able to shape their careers according to changes occurring in the labor market and in their personal lives (Savickas, 2016).

In the introductory essay of a special issue on the topic, Cinamon, Hardin and Flum explain how career education has the potential to address the challenges put forth by Future of Education and Skills 2030 (Cinamon, Hardin & Flum, 2019). They point out that today, more than ever, education is seen as a vital contributor and accelerator of economic development, and as a key factor in the effective management of these changes throughout a person's work-life.

The recently published State Comptroller's Report (Annual Audit Report 71b, 2021) also addresses this issue in its recommendations, arguing that **"to prepare its graduates for successfully functioning in their future lives, the education system must implement among its students, alongside knowledge and values, also the skills they will need as adults in their social, personal and professional lives in the 21st century"** (Annual Audit Report 71b, p. 43).

The Darca network rose to the challenge, and launched a unique action model for its students. Following 10 years of operation, the network seeks to learn how its graduates perceive their study experience. The aim of the current study was to examine the educational factors that promote the development of graduates who function successfully in their personal, social and professional lives. The evaluation of the educational framework at the focus of this current study was conducted with sensitivity to the developmental stage of the participants - the young adulthood stage.

### The Young Adulthood Stage - Exploration and Identity Formation

The young adulthood stage is the life period between the late teens to early thirties. According to Cinamon (2018) this is an interim period, characterized by instability, during which young adults prepare for commitment and stability. At this stage of life, young people engage in a wide variety of non-committal experiences, both in the occupational area, through casual jobs, and in the romantic area, in the form of non-committal romantic relationships. These non-committal experiences constitute the basis of the central mechanism that characterizes the period of young adulthood - identity exploration (Arnett, 2005).

Exploration is a complex psychological process which entails an examination of the self and the environment. It is an action by which the individual gets to know him/her self, his/her environment and the reciprocity which exists between the two. The results of this exploration are manifested in decision-making in broad contexts, among them occupational and family contexts, which shape the individual's lifestyle (Flum & Kaplan, 2006; Porfeli & Lee, 2012). In other words, exploration is an inevitable process which is based on diverse non-committal experiences and whose aim is self-discovery in relation to the environment (Blustein & Flum, 1999).

Cinamon (2018) sheds a light on the wide theoretical agreement which exists regarding the importance of exploratory and identity formation processes during the young adulthood stage (Flum & Kaplan, 2006; Grotevant, 1987; Kroger, 2007; Luyckx et al., 2006). Erickson (Erickson, 1968), followed by others (Flum & Blustein, 2000; Flum & Kaplan, 2006 for example), argues that young adults self-assert themselves through an examination of various possibilities and values, as part of their self-exploration within the philosophical, religious, political, occupational and inter-personal spheres. These arguments raise significant questions with regards to the factors which promote this critical process, and the social and cultural contexts in which it occurs.

Cinamon and her colleagues (2012) investigated these exploratory processes among young adults. Using qualitative research methods, the researchers identified nine different spheres of exploration young adults in Israel are preoccupied with: studies, work, finance, romantic relationships, contact with their origin family, balancing their different roles, leisure, politics and religion. An in-depth analysis of the findings revealed a number of key areas of exploration: work, balancing different roles, relationships with the origin family and finance.

This evaluation report addresses the young adulthood stage and its challenges, examining the educational factors that foster a structured and effective exploration process among Darca network graduates, as a basis for successful future functioning, characterized by a rich and meaningful lifestyle.

## Method

### Participants

The study participants were 22 graduates of the Darca school network, who attended one of the seven schools located in the geo-social periphery of Israel. Seven of the graduates are members of the Druze ethno-religious group, who attended the Darca Druze High School for Science and Leadership in Yarka. Five additional graduates are Jews who attended the Maxim Levy Darca High School in Lod, and another five, who are also Jewish, attended Darca Ilan and Asaf Ramon High School and Darca Menachem Begin High School in Gedera. Another five Jewish participants attended Rene Cassin Darca in Jerusalem, Makif He' Darca in Ashkelon and Darca New High School in Bat Yam.

The 22 participants (12 men and 10 women) are young adults aged 19-29 ( $M=23.72$ ;  $SD=2.81$ ). The vast majority ( $n=20$ ) are single, and the rest ( $n=2$ ) are married, of which one participant is a mother. Most of the participants - 90.47% ( $n=19$ ) are studying in higher education (during the study or just before), of which 84.21% ( $n=16$ ) are at universities across Israel, with 57.89% ( $n=11$ ) of those studying scientific degrees (like engineering and computer science) and medicine. Most of the graduates ( $n=16$ ) combine a steady job, held between several months and 3 years, with their studies. More than half of the participants ( $n=14$ ) stayed living in the same town in which they grew up, most of whom ( $n=11$ ) are still living with their parents.

### Tools

A semi-structured interview was formulated for the current study. The interview protocol emphasized the aim of the study - to assess the learning experience of the Darca network alumni, and included 3 anchor questions: 1) Tell us about yourself, 2) Describe your study experience at Darca high-school, and 3) Describe your plans for the future. The anchor questions and sub-questions which are included in the interview protocol, are detailed below in the appendices chapter (see Appendix 1). It should be noted that the sub-questions were only asked if the respondents failed to answer them spontaneously.

### Research Team

The research team consisted of two expert researchers from the career education field, who conducted the interviews, and one additional participant who assisted the data processing and analysis. A leading researcher<sup>1</sup> supervised and monitored the data analysis process, according to the recommended guidelines of a qualitative research method (The Consensual Qualitative Research - CQR; Hill et al., 1997; Hill et al., 2005) in the Hebrew version by Rich and Cinamon (Rich & Cinamon, 2007).

### Procedure

#### *Call for Participants*

The Darca network sent out an invitation to its alumni, through the schools' alumni coordinators, calling for prospective participants. The invitation detailed the aim of the study, and noted that participation is voluntary and entails a conversation with a career expert. 26 graduates expressed their interest, of which 22 eventually participated.

<sup>1</sup> The leading researcher is Prof. Rachel Gali Cinamon, Dean of the Humanities Faculty and Head of the Career development Lab at Tel-Aviv University, and an international scholar in the field of career development.

## Procedure

The interview was held over Zoom. The duration of each interview was one hour. Participants were promised anonymity before the commencement of the interview, and given the opportunity to stop the interview at any point and/or choose not to answer specific questions. Furthermore, they were made aware that the interviews are recorded, and later transcribed, to allow for data analysis. In addition to an interview, the graduates were asked to fill out a form containing personal details like age, gender, marital status, occupation, studies and other details related to residence.

## Data Analysis

The interviews were analysed, as mentioned above, in accordance with Rich and Cinamon's (Rich & Cinamon, 2007) Israeli adaptation of the Consensual Qualitative Research method (Hill et al., 1997; Hill et al., 2005). The first step centered on identifying themes, categories and sub-categories. Each member of the research team read the interview transcriptions independently. Through a group discussion, and after approval by the supervising researcher, the main themes were identified. Subsequently, each member of the team reviewed the transcripts, extricating relevant quotes for each of the agreed upon themes. During another group discussion, the team worked through contradictions and fundamental disagreements related to those themes, until they reached agreement about their definition. The next step entailed the team members defining categories and sub-categories within each theme. Their objective was to narrow down, change or remove categories and sub-categories, using the grounded theory method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and the constant comparative method (Hill et al., 1997), until they formulate categories and corresponding sub-categories.

The thematic analysis and its findings were presented to the supervising researcher for final approval. The supervising researcher pointed out to a few inconsistencies, which brought about an additional meeting of the team for revising the categories and sub-categories and reaching final decisions unanimously.

## Results

The network's graduates who participated in the study possess a **strong value system**, with core values such as excellence and drive, sense of belonging to the school and commitment to the community and for giving to others (the will to do good and have an impact). Most of the participants noted these values in relation to their period at the school. The participants also described **a broad and rich life**, combining a range of roles (work, studies, family, community and leisure). Another characteristic which is reflected in the graduates indicates a clarity with regards to their sense of self, which enables them to draw **a clear picture of their desired future**. Accordingly, graduates of the Darca network who participated in the study describe a cohesive self-identity, based on structured and effective exploratory processes, which enables them to set clear goals and objectives for the future. These characteristics are impressive considering the nature of young adulthood, as described in the introduction above.

Another component of the results section addresses the educational framework which fostered the development of each graduate. Accordingly, the findings show a momentum that originated in school values, which serve as cornerstones for the guidance and implementation of educational practices in the system as a whole, in the administration and for the use of the educational staff. These values and practices served as an engine for the development of positive emotional experiences among the learners - alumni of the network.

These two central spheres of influence identified in the interviews analysis - the graduates' profiles and educational framework - will be elaborated on in the results section. Table 2 summarises the themes, categories and sub-categories for each sphere. In the graduate profile sphere, three main themes were identified, while three main themes were also identified in the educational framework sphere. Participants quotes presented in this section will only include their first initial, alongside the name of the school they attended (in parenthesis). This will be done to maintain their anonymity, as promised.

**Table 2 -**

Graduate profile and behavioral, emotional and value-based underpinnings (themes, categories and sub-categories)

Graduate Profile		
Guiding Values	Life Style	Clear View of the Future
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drive and excellence</li> <li>2. Sense of belonging to the school</li> <li>3. Commitment to the community and giving to others (the will to do good and have impact)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Balancing different roles in life</li> <li>2. A role model</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Professional aspirations in the field of management, entrepreneurship and leadership</li> <li>2. "You and I will Change the World" (commitment to active citizenship)</li> </ol>

Educational Framework		
Guiding School Values	Educational Behavioral Practices	Emotional
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drive and excellence at school</li> <li>2. Supporting and recognizing the other</li> <li>3. Leadership and visibility</li> <li>4. Balancing different roles</li> <li>5. Faith in the student (educational self-efficacy)</li> <li>6. The student in a holistic view</li> <li>7. The teacher as expert</li> <li>8. Teaching as a calling</li> <li>9. Dedication to teaching</li> </ol>	<p><b>System Practices:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Small and familiar</li> <li>2. Supportive boundaries</li> <li>3. Teaching which is based on expanding horizons</li> <li>4. Social and community initiatives</li> <li>5. Fostering soft skills               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time management</li> <li>- Public speaking</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. "Competition as an obligation for group success"</li> <li>7. Reputation</li> </ol> <p><b>Management Practices:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involvement</li> <li>2. Open Door policy</li> </ol> <p><b>Educational Staff Practices:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Diverse experiences</li> <li>2. Critical thinking and pluralism</li> <li>3. Autonomy in learning the process</li> <li>4. "Give them a fishing rod, rather than fish" - nurturing good learning habits</li> <li>5. "Don't give up on anyone"</li> <li>6. "Seeing the person beyond the student"</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sense of belonging, family and friendship</li> <li>2. Happiness and fun</li> <li>3. Reciprocity</li> <li>4. Care, concern and love</li> </ol>

## Graduate Profile

### A. Guiding Values:

Graduates of the Darca network described in their stories clear values that indicate a cohesive self-identity, mentioned in relation to personal, social and cultural contexts in their lives.

#### 1. Drive and excellence

The graduates described an effort aimed at making progress, succeeding and standing out in terms of productivity in the academic and occupational spheres of their lives.

R (Yarka) describes her own process of personal development as follows: *"I can tell you that I am stubborn with regards to my success. Really stubborn when it comes to my success, and I never give up. I always make an effort. I am not afraid to fail sometimes, always do my best to meet my goals"*. Similarly, L (Begin) says: *"My approach is 'I'm here, I would like to stay, but I also want to progress! I don't want to just stay inside my cocoon.' So, I hope that with an MA I will get a promotion."*

#### 2. Sense of belonging to the school

The network's graduates stressed their profound and strong sense of belonging to the school. This was manifested through emotional elements like care, longing and good memories. Accordingly, the graduates expressed a clear need to continue their connection with the school in the form of personal contact with the educational staff and management. D (Maxim Levy) illustrates this for example by saying: *"Last week I visited my former physics teacher. Just like that, on a Friday, I went to see him and check up on him. See how the class is doing, and how they are preparing for their matriculation exams. It was such fun, because I still feel that I belong. I still feel a sense of belonging to my high school. It is still supposedly my home."* A (Maxim Levy) shares his thoughts: *"I hope this will help and contribute, because I really do care very much about this school. I tell you, it is so important for me. Once in a while I speak to the principal, the woman who was principal when I was a student there. Not often, but she knows how much it burns in me. I still know students who go there. I see them on the train, and they remember me. It is important and it is a noble cause."*

On top of their sense of belonging, the graduates expressed a strong motivation for maintaining contact with the school through practical action, out of a desire to "give back", as they put it. This they wish to do by actively participating in educational, social and community projects which are held at the school, such as mentoring programs, courses and alumni events. N (Yarka) demonstrates this by saying that *"over the last 10 years, I have had at least 1-2 events related to the school, whether it's speaking in front of students, or at an education fair, or share my experience with the students, speak about my medicine studies (how do you get accepted? What is it like? What drives me?) It gives me a sense of mission, a calling, makes me smile, for myself and for the school... I would also like to come and contribute more to that place."*

### 3. Commitment to the community and giving to others - the will to do good and have impact

In their descriptions, the graduates highlighted a core value which is currently guiding them, which is commitment to the community and giving to others. They describe their will to “give back”, to influence others and have impact, and see voluntary work as an inherent part of their daily life. M (Yarka) stresses that giving back makes up a central value in his identity and says *“Always care for others. No matter what... If you are able, always give back.”* R (Yarka) says: *“I have a non-profit... It is a kind of unofficial non-profit... so, from an early age I have been leading initiatives, since I was 15. Big initiatives. About three years ago, I decided to get together a group of young people in my village and start initiatives together. So, basically, ever since then we have started various initiatives together, all kinds of projects according to the needs of the village... When there are holidays, we do something relevant... For example, we gave school supplies to families in need. We gave away scholarships to students from families in need. During Corona last year, for example, we brought our group together with One Heart organisation... and collaborated on many projects, something like four charity initiatives during Corona... It had a big impact and publicity. I even appeared in the media a few times...”*

In their stories, some of the graduates emphasize the educational channel as their preferred channel for community work. For example, A (Ramon) points out his personal experience as what drives him to be socially involved with his community, explaining his choice of education as a means to fulfilling this endeavor. He says: *“I have a fire burning inside me to give back, to make things better. To help kids grow up better, have better tools and skills, more tools... I see many bad things, bad habits in the community, things I want to fix, and I believe this is the place to do it, through education, here at the school is where things... This is where it all starts. If we catch this here in time, and control it, things can be amazing!”* S (New High School) says: *“It is important for me to lend a hand, you know, to this country at the end of the day, and also beyond, things I have done in the past... I was a tutor at the school I attended. I also worked as a teacher. Although I don't have a teaching certificate, I worked in teaching. I volunteered with youth at risk. It was important for me.”* L (Yarka) also highlights voluntary work as an important aspect of her life: *“volunteering is an integral part of my life. I have been volunteering since I was 13-14. I can't do without it. It completes my daily life. I volunteer in the same place I did my national service last year, with youth at risk... This year I teach it as part of a scholarship, but also beyond. I teach 7th-12th classes a variety of subjects they need help with (chemistry, physics, mathematics). I also volunteer to teach for the psychometric exam... This is my thing, I love the material... I started doing this during Corona, when all institutions that prepare for the psychometric exam were closed, or people didn't have any income to spend on classes... I invest most of my time there... Last year I was also active in informal education, supporting groups of students who were not at risk... who wanted to participate in activities which are not a part of formal education... and also a group of students at risk who were working on an amazing project... I happened to accompany them over a few meetings, and got close to one student and really take him in, talk to him and understand what his challenges are”.*

## B. Life Style

### 1. Balancing different roles in life

When participants talk about their core values, they emphasize another important aspect of their conduct, that is the ability to maintain and nurture a broad and rich life, combining a range of roles at work, studies, family, community and leisure. The graduates are therefore committed to community social activities, as well as to leisure and family activities alongside demanding academic and / or occupational tasks.

Y (Yarka), for example, describes how he combines work, family, studies and leisure in his life, saying: *"I have two jobs - I'm working in the army now, so when I finish my workday, I come home and continue to work in our company. I work around the clock. Being VP is around the clock and demands a lot. Sometimes, I send emails at 2 am, because I don't have any other time to catch up. So, there are these jobs. I am also completing an MA at the Technion right now... I knew I don't have time, but I know if I make an effort I can always find time. How did I do it? I knew that I could, in the best-case scenario, find four times a week to make time. I have a home gym... I am going to exercise there now for an hour... By the way, I also get up to the baby at night"*. L (Yarka) emphasizes the need to combine and balance different roles, and highlights her voluntary community work too: *"Doing more in life, is something I took with me. This is why I still volunteer. I also work of course. I can't sit around without a job, simply must have one. I have been working for 4-5 years now... With regards to social life, it is very important to me. Studies are really important too, but for me, enjoying the experience too is incredibly important. **I try to balance it all together**, but if you ask me, 'would you rather go to biochemistry class or go out with friends? No, sure, I would choose going out with friends. **There is time for everything**, but social life is always important, because that's what you'll remember from your university days. Not a biochemistry or organic chemistry or biology class and all that"*.

### 2. A role model

The graduates' stories reflect their ability to internalize the teacher's conduct and behavior as a role model. This developmental component has served as a moral compass and inspiration for the graduates. Therefore, the teacher's character was described by graduates as influential and valuable, able to shape world views and lifestyles throughout their life. Some of them shared that **the teacher's character has "stayed with me throughout life"**, and some even described her in impressive terms as "greater than life". M (Rene Cassin) says, for example: *"He might have been my math's teacher, but he was much more than that, for me and for the whole class. I learnt so much from him, it's crazy how dominant this person is in terms of the meaning school had for me"*. A (Maxim Levy) says: *"from 10th grade to 11th grade we had a new class teacher. It was amazing. Truthfully. His name was Y. I think he was only teaching for two years at the time. That person changed my whole way of thinking, maybe because he was new to teaching himself and we could witness him learning new things himself. I would sit down with him and speak openly to him, and learn just by watching him learn, and it advanced me a lot, I think."*

## C. Clear View of the Future

The personality components of the graduates, as described above, serve as a basis for them to formulate a clear picture of their future. They were therefore able to paint a very clear, detailed and elaborate "day in their future" (at a time of their choosing). In their description, they mainly mentioned professional managerial positions of an entrepreneurial and independent nature, and meaningful work, alongside exceptional community work to promote a "better world".

### 1. Professional aspirations in the field of management, entrepreneurship and leadership

The graduates' plans for the future include ambitions for professional advancement which entail initiative, leadership and management capabilities in fields that are interesting and meaningful for them. S (New high school) for example, stresses his drive for advancement in the professional area, saying: *"I don't care about salary, because it does not excite me so much. It is more about I can develop myself. I prioritize other things in life. That is what interests me and important for me"*.

H (Ramon) highlights the aspects of entrepreneurship and initiative in his future plans, saying: *"I wish myself that in three years, I would have my own business, a start-up. That I would already be experienced. Even if it fails. At least I will have had the experience of founding something myself. Starting an independent business, doing the marketing myself. Everything it entails. This is where I would like to be"*. H (Yarka) too agrees, stressing the desire to do something meaningful, interesting and influential. He says: *"In the future I see myself more into having a medical start-up. Medical start-up, it is something that interests me a lot. Technology is a very influential field, and if you combine it with medicine you can do good things"*.

### 2. "You and I will Change the World" - commitment to active citizenship

Alongside their impressive professional aspirations, the graduates illuminate their stories with their drive for intensive and meaningful social, community volunteer work, that would potentially make their community and the whole world a better place, and as Y (Yarka) says *"It's part of my great vision. I tell you that if I die now, today, I want the world to be better"*. M (Yarka) elaborates on the community aspect of giving back: *"I feel that what I am looking for in my work is a sense of mission. It is really important for me. A sense of calling is important for me, making an impact and advancing issues. It is not just about my own change or progress, but the environment and society as a whole, people, young people especially... I am staying in my village, and I see myself as someone who can make a difference. This is exactly the place where I can make an impact, and I feel the need to do so. This is the reason I see myself staying here. Helping the community to develop, is what really matters to me"*. A (Maxim Levy): *"So, I want to get up in the morning and feel like I make a difference for the public, or that I have an impact on a group of people. Not necessarily something substantial that has anything to do with the office or my place of work. But an ability to affect change on a large group of people. This is what is important for me. I hope this will happen in five years, and not in 20 years. But this is what I am aiming for and what I aspire to."* M (Yarka) explains the essence of giving back in a global context, saying: *"If we think about it, we are all of us in the world one big family, after all. I will happily help anyone, really. Anyone who needs it, no matter when and what, I am there, happy to help everyone. Also, in terms of what I try to develop. I try to develop projects that will actually promote the environment and a better world"*.

A (Ramon) also explains the mechanism of giving back and having a commitment to the community, giving the following example: *“Do positive things. One of the things that really bothered me when I was younger, was nutritional insecurity among kids. It angered me that there are hungry kids. Now, this is just one example. There are so many other causes and issues - not only around the whole world, even just in our country, and let's consider even a smaller micro-cosmos, my home town - that need to **be solved, improved, be done better** and that we need to increase awareness about. If more people take their money and put it towards good causes, **the world will be a much better place**”*. A (Maxim Levy) incorporates his commitment to the community and society in Israel and desire to make a difference in his personal dreams, saying: *“my dream is to develop another iron dome system... and I think I can contribute my skills for something very important, I'm sure you saw now in Operation Guardian of The walls. You saw this insane technology. In my opinion, this is something that is important to do. I'm not sure I would call it a mission”*.

The graduates' characteristics described above are explained in the interviews as a result of an educational foundation consisting of a value system fostered by the school. These core values shaped the systemic, managerial, and pedagogical practices and nurtured a profound emotional experience among the graduates (see Table 2).

## Educational Foundation

### A. Guiding School Values

#### 1. Educational Drive and Excellence

The school actively sought to encourage academic achievements in the students. The graduates describe the many efforts by the school to foster motivation and nurture a drive to develop and excel, and the resources that have been allocated to developing academic excellence. D (Ramon) tells how in her experience, *“the school did everything they could to make sure the students will pass their matriculation exams. Providing all possible resources to 11th and 12th grade students”*, and A (Ramon) adds: *“We were encouraged to excel at this school. There were a lot of early morning classes in the accelerated subjects. I had it in accelerated biology”*. M (Yarka) demonstrates one of the school's ways of encouraging excellence, saying: *“There were many signs everywhere aimed at pushing us. Wherever you walked around the school, you would notice special signs or posters, and they were rooted into your mind... that you have no limits, that there's no limit to what you can do. That you should always try to reach your goals. There were many many such signs. Not just one. So, they tried to motivate us as much as possible. Made sure you would always see encouraging words in front of you. It actually helped”*.

The value of excelling is evident also from the graduates' stories about their families. They all emphasized how their families encouraged them to make an effort, persevere, and be determined to succeed and excel at school. It was mentioned both with regards to the parents, and the siblings who provided a role model.

M (Yarka) says: *"I was always brought up to be a leader, to be an elite. To not give up, as the most important thing. No matter how difficult the road is, if you have a goal, just aim and reach it. No matter how hard it is, you are able. and I was always encouraged"*. N (Yarka) adds: *"I think it was my father. I think it is my home. I don't know I think it was my father. My father has a very strong personality, he's very determined. This is how I was brought up. No matter what, you have the capabilities, you do what's required and meet your goals. No matter what it takes. You'll get there in the end. I always got that positive feedback. Do you remember how good you used to be? At school, look how good you were in elementary school, in high school, always. You were always first. You'll also be first this time. I should mention that I was told that also when I had some setbacks at school, it was not all success. Not at all. It doesn't matter. Next time, learn from your mistakes, learn where you did not do good, improve it, and move on. I know it deep inside me"*. H (Ramon) describes a similar family experience and explains: *"I think the most important thing was to put yourself all in with whatever it was you were doing. It was mostly about investing, seeing results, thinking about the future, think about what I have to do to create a good future for myself"*. A (Ramon) says *"the siblings had a big role in appreciating the importance of fulfillment, it was very present. Oh, and being brought up by an army person is a tough upbringing. It's all about time management"*. A (Ramon) highlights the siblings' part in providing a role model for excellence and drive in the family, saying: *"education and study are the highest value for us. I have two very sharp brothers. I am the middle child. I am the last one to start studying, while my two brothers are in the midst of it, going strong. It was something that was obvious from childhood, that everyone must study at home and at school, that nothing but the best grades will be acceptable"*.

## 2. Supporting and recognizing the other

Alongside the value base described above, which puts excellence and drive in the center, the graduates spoke a lot about another prominent value, seeing the other and helping and giving back to the community. These values were also reflected both in the school as a system, and by the pedagogical staff personally. A (Ramon) shares the values he soaked up at school: *"I can say that my school raised the banner of excellence and giving back as its core values. Sensitivity to the other, excellence, giving back. And these were indeed the values I took away with me from school. It was reflected in countless projects initiated by the school that I participated in..."*. H (Ramon) adds: ***values like the drive for excellence and helping friends. Mutual support. These are things that were clearly evident... I do remember a lot of talk about helping each other out. It was not a competition"***.

M (Yarka) describes the mechanism that helped him develop the value of helping others, attributing it to the pedagogical staff. He says that *"they always tried to help, so it provided a role model for me. I was always there for anyone. If anyone needed help, I gave it willingly with all my heart. You see the way the teachers conduct themselves, you see that it works and makes people get better, so you do the same, you give back and feel the happiness it brings"*. L (Yarka) also illustrates this, admitting: *"I am a very competitive person and I knew that about myself, but the teacher gave me an opportunity... He taught me to also see others. Despite my competitiveness, despite wanting to get what I want, I know that I will get it, but I will never do it in dishonest ways"*. It seems that nurturing the value of seeing the other and helping each other was instilled in the students by the educational staff both directly through teaching and discussions, and indirectly through their personal conduct which modeled helping others and reciprocity - they lived up to their own principles!

### 3. Leadership and visibility

Another core value which stood out in the interviews was the significance given in school to activity which is based on leadership and visibility. Accordingly, priority was given to activities which offer the students a chance to experiment with entrepreneurship and with leading community, social and educational projects which have a wide-reaching impact. H (Yarka) recounts a powerful personal experience: *"It was during the 62nd anniversary of the Knesset... it was even uploaded to YouTube. I spoke about the state of the Druze in Israel, how we would be happy to be an integral part of the country. Yeah, it was a nice one-minute-long speech. At that time, it was a big deal for me. When I got to school the next day, the whole school was waiting for me. They clapped their hands and all that. It was very moving... Yeah, that was a very meaningful moment. They supported everything and everyone. Not just me. Anyone who achieved anything or did anything. For example, students who went to the US for a year, as part of an exchange program, when they would return the whole school welcomed them with flowers and clapping..."*

S (New Highschool) says that the encouragement for leadership and visibility was mediated by the teachers. According to him, the message they got from the teachers was clear: *"Go lead! Go lead the way, take the lead on a specific project, some assignment in civil studies, this kind of stuff..."* "The school really contributed to that feeling, at least some of the teachers did... It also pushed us to become officers in the IDF. Whoever could do it, became an officer. Just lead. Go get things done!" M (Yarka) describes the practices used to foster visibility: *"there were many cases where I had to stand in front of an audience and speak... We had to do presentations in groups, at every class. We'd go out and discuss a topic we wanted to speak about. A presentation kind of like a TED talk... Come up with a topic and then stand on the stage at the auditorium, not in the classroom, and speak publicly".* A (Maxim Levy) also recounts: *"We would speak and present our start-up in front of a large audience, and it was...wow".* N (Yarka) stresses the point that the message was passed on directly and personally by the school administration: *"we had leadership lessons in 10th grade. The school principal used to teach us too, and once he gave each student an assignment to speak on stage at the auditorium about something we found interesting. I spoke about music, and about how it can affect my mood. Then, at the end of my long speech, he asked me to sing. I cannot sing. He wouldn't let me off stage before I sang. I was very bad. But this act opened my eyes and helped me overcome my shyness".*

### 4. Balancing different roles

As mentioned, the graduates describe a wide and rich lifestyle based on a combination of different roles, including work, studies, family, community and leisure. In their stories, the graduates describe the beginnings of this lifestyle already in their school days at Darca schools. The students were able to balance successfully between studies, leisure, social life and community work already back then. Y (Makif He) describes the experience of balancing the different activities during her school years positively: *"at school, I really enjoyed participating in extracurricular activities. I went to youth movement since 7th grade. I was in the young leadership program of the Ministry of education until 9th grade. In 9th grade, I went to leaders course. I did that with other students from my class. This was already a class experience. We were in it together. The whole class. At the leaders course. It was a 5-day seminar in Mitzpe Ramon. This experience unified our class. Not everyone was there. But the experience created new friendships... In 10th grade, I took the Magen David Adom course and during 11th grade I volunteered as a first aid officer at MADA. I couldn't find time in 12th grade. But regret it a little now. Because I can see now that it gave me a lot of skills I can use in medicine, how to listen and express empathy to patients. It was a very meaningful voluntary work for me. The training gives you confidence. It is very meaningful to be meaningful for other people. To let them know that they have someone to lean on. Whenever we had to organize any social events in class, we would get together a few girls and start everybody up and excited".*

H (Ramon) associates his ability to combine different demanding roles to his studies at the Darca school. H describes his strategy for balancing work, studies, social life and leisure, explaining how he gained that strategy during his time at the Darca school. He says: *"Since school I learnt how to navigate between different activities that are important to me. Whether it's the army that takes up part of the day, or something else, I then think what I want to do with the rest of my day. So, I have the start-up where I work, and my studies. I also started playing the piano over a year ago. This way I manage to put everything I want to do in my schedule... and leave time for friends and TV and such things"*. R (Yarka) continues and adds: ***"Time management is one of the best things I got from school. Knowing how to divide the time and how to be organised. So we can get everything we want done, and even extra if we allocated time correctly"***. Y also says: *"At Darca they taught us correct time management. How to manage your time. It started at 10th grade. The previous high school principal was very pedantic about it. By the way, it is a cornerstone of meeting goals. What made me have to manage my time correctly was the very busy schedule I had at Darca"*.

A secondary analysis of the study findings highlighted the personal core values of the educational and administrative staff in the schools. These values stood out in particular in the stories of the graduates, and seem to have contributed significantly to shaping the character of the graduates.

## 5. Faith in the student

Another key value that stood out in the graduates' stories was the sincere and persistent belief in students' ability to succeed in their studies. The school administration and the educational staff acted relentlessly to instill this belief also among the students, and foster academic self-efficacy in each and every student in the school. This aspect, according to the graduates, presumably served as a solid basis for them to develop motivation for learning, investment and perseverance in their academic efforts, and eventually for success and much higher achievements than they could hope for. Some of the graduates even described how this experience of having their teachers believe in them continued to provide confidence and support throughout their adult lives.

A (Maxim Levy) describes his personal experience: *"I was not that good at maths... If not for the teacher who believed in me, I would never have taken 4 units. I would probably take only 3 units. I really really wanted to do four units, but wasn't so good. She really did believe in me and support me... I had terrible grades, so if she wouldn't have believed in me, I would have taken 3 units rather than 4. I felt she tagged me positively and said 'he'll do 4 units' and thanks to her, I really did"*.

D (Maxim Levy) tells about her experience more broadly, saying: *"they believed in us students. They really showed the students they believe in them. That was what provided for a fun learning experience, that makes you want to get into class and not skip school"*. H (Yarka) describes how his experience of his teachers having faith in him during school, expressed through compliments, has been driving him to action and confronting challenges until today. He says: *"The teachers compliment you about every little thing. If they can, they compliment you. It was amazing. It was amazing. Even now, when I'm at peak stress, with three start-ups, presentations, and it's never ending, I remember that there were people who believe in me. Give a push, be strong, don't complain, keep going. It's amazing. I can feel it"*.

## 6. The student in a holistic view

*"I really really felt seen. They saw us, in the classroom and beyond. It was not just about teaching the class and go, let's put it this way"* (L, Begin). This statement represents a central and crucial element in the policy and vision of the Darca schools. It is reflected in the pedagogical approach and practiced by the teaching staff, expressed through their involvement, support, assistance and holistic encouragement, in the personal, social, familial and academic arenas. A (Maxim Levy) elaborates on this aspect, stressing the deep familiarity the teachers had with students, and the legitimacy and confidence the students felt to interact with the teachers on topics other than school material: **"I think the teachers really knew us. Just like I told you about my relationship that ended. At this level, these kinds of topics, which are explosive for 15-16-17 year olds, and I don't think students would talk about this stuff unless they felt very secure and safe around the teacher. We were only high school students, at the end of the day. It's embarrassing... I think that at our school, many of us, including myself, spoke to the teachers about anything, and felt free to do so"**. (A, Maxim Levi)

## 7. The teacher as expert

One other crucial element of Darca schools, as reflected by the graduates' interviews, is professionalism. This is expressed in the way the teachers are described, emphasizing the fact that they have an academic background which is relevant to their field of teaching. This education leads to teaching from a place of up-to-date knowledge, and fluency in the subject matter. Some of the respondents described the teachers in terms of "masters in their field". It seems that this aspect gave the students a sense of confidence and trust and drove them to learn out of respect and appreciation for the teacher and the field. Y (Makif He) says: **"the teacher was also exceptionally brilliant. Really... I remember her telling us that she was an electrical engineer, and that her psychometric exam score was 780. She would solve an exercise, for example, but would show four different ways of solving it, not one. She was very sharp. She was a real inspiration for me, as in a real wow"**.

N (Yarka) says: *"one of the things that made me feel good at school was the quality of the teachers... There were many PhDs, as in almost every teacher was a doctor. It is not common to see that"*. L (Yarka) adds: **"that is how they chose teachers at our school. They chose quality people to teach"**.

## 8. Teaching as a calling

Another essential component which was identified in the interviews refers to the fact that the educational staff is described as being on a mission, treating teaching as their calling. Accordingly, the teaching is driven out of love and personal connection to the subject matter, and more broadly to the teaching profession itself. This style of teaching inspired the students to learn for the sake of meaning and interest. D (Maxim Levy): **"the teachers had passion for teaching, passion for their work. That means that the literature teacher actually loved literature. The maths teacher loved mathematics"**.

Y (Yarka) demonstrates this by mentioning one specific teacher: *"90% of the credit goes to the teacher A. I'll tell you why. He had a spiritual side - this man loved his work. He taught out of a sense of mission, for the school and for the field... I loved his subject because he loved it. Because he loved the method he taught. He loved his profession. Not many people have that. Many people do it very... I don't want to say boring, but they deliver the subject matter..."*. N (Yarka) describes the personal influence this had on him: *"they come full of passion, and that was passed on to us... when you see your teacher with energy and motivation to pass on his knowledge, it makes a difference"*.

## 9. Dedication to teaching

Dedication to teaching is a central value of the teacher's image as it was reflected from the interviews. This was expressed by the time and effort invested by teachers, way pass the official school hours, in their spare time. They did this through tutoring, individual assistance and academic support.

D (Maxim Levy): "my maths teacher always said 'if you have any questions about the homework write me on WhatsApp. Write page number, exercise number', and if I needed help - she really was available. She really did want us to succeed. She also used to add support tutorials to those who needed it twice a week. She'd say 'just come'. If she saw someone did not do good on their test, she'd say 'come to the tutorial. I'll sit with you'". M (Rene Cassin) says: "the teacher invested an effort in each and every student. He would stay late to study with me for the test, and wouldn't go home until I was able to solve the exercise. He used to say 'I'll explain again and again, if you need it'. So, I hated maths, but I loved learning maths with him. I mean... It's unbelievable".

M elaborates, describing the dedication of the entire system: "the school and the teachers were there for anyone who needed extra help. They gave everything. We had extra classes and tutorials, all on account of the teachers' free time. They didn't mind staying back a few hours, as long as the students were able to do the work, and it is not obvious". A (Ramon) also says: "there was nobody who needed help and didn't get it from the teachers. The level of care was amazing, sitting down in their lunch break, extra tutorials in the afternoons, available on WhatsApp for help with maths homework..."

## B. Educational Behavioral Practices

The guiding principles described above lay the groundwork for leading pedagogical practices at the schools, first as general guidelines at the system level and as school policy, and later on as pedagogical practices to be used by the teaching staff. The practices were as follows:

### ◇ System Practices:

#### 1. 'Small and familiar'

The study participants attached importance to the size of the school and talked about classroom numbers and student numbers in each classroom as parameters that created a pleasant (family-like) learning atmosphere and allowed for individual attention from the teachers, which promoted differential learning. A (Lod) say: "**our class was small. There were 20-22 students in our class. So it was very convenient. It's not like classes with 40 students, where you can't learn anything. This is also the advantage of the school... It contributes to a family atmosphere. It is also a lot easier to learn this way. Practically speaking. The teacher can actually give you attention**". A (New High School): "The school itself was very small. It was not a large number of students. Less than 500, which is very small. It is more like a family this way. Everybody knows each other and also the teachers... There's a family atmosphere... A different atmosphere. It is much more fun to go to school" (S, New High School). M (Jerusalem) mentioned the ability to learn and internalize the knowledge thanks to the small class size, and says: "the class is just smaller. A small class which gets a little more attention... The teachers were the best M (Rene Cassin): They treated us much more personally and understood us, contained us, a lot more than in a big class where you have to give attention to many students".

## 2. Supportive boundaries

Another practice was the existence of supportive boundaries. Participants described a school atmosphere which included clear and consistent discipline. S (New High School): *"they knew how to hold us and control us. If you do something wrong, you get punished. This is how it should be. So, they didn't let us escape. They didn't let us get up to no good too much"*. Another respondent expressed her appreciation for her class teacher and the respect she received from the students. She emphasized: *"I would preserve the way my class teacher taught. She knew how to silence us without even raising her voice. This is something I took away with me. That's it. It is as if she showed authority and that was enough to scare us off so that we wouldn't even dare to speak during class. This is something I took away. I really liked it. Usually teachers... constantly have to yell... 'quiet, quiet, quiet'. There it didn't happen. She didn't even raise her voice once"* (D, Maxim Levy).

However, respondents pointed out that the discipline at the school was not "blind". Alongside boundary setting, there was a lot of flexibility according to the graduates, and adaptation of the school's response to the students' character and needs. A (Ramon) describes it well: *"there was discipline at school. Discipline is very dependent on who enforces it. Some teachers were more tough than others. All in all, the discipline was very good... **When the school enforces a disciplinary practice there are no excuses.** If you have to wear the school badge, for example, then the principal stands at the entrance every day, no compromises, if you are not wearing it you are sent home. Some things they didn't compromise about. I think the beauty of discipline is to know how to **adapt the rules to the person in front of you.** Some kids, if you catch them and hold too tight, they'll run away between your fingers. Not everyone has to pass in terms of discipline. A teacher who knows that, and knows how to make adjustments, he will be rewarded. I think what's most important is not to be hardheaded. They made sure to be flexible... I think discipline can be taken into all kinds of directions. **The teachers took it to a pretty positive direction all in all, which helps you understand why things happen** Usually, discipline where you can't understand why some rules are there, creates frustration and bitterness."*

Another participant emphasized the role of the student-teacher partnership in maintaining boundaries, and said that the school atmosphere was a kind of alliance between teachers and students. This conduct helped to foster personal accountability among the students, and compliance with the rules of discipline out of understanding and responsibility: *"Usually they trust their students. This also helps to make you feel mature, that you have responsibility. It makes people be less problematic. After all, they can see that teachers don't call the parents, but talk to the students instead. They talk to us. Listen, what you did is wrong. You have done this and that. You need to follow the rules. Then the student understands... and start behaving differently, accordingly."* (M, Yarka)

## 3. Teaching which is based on expanding horizons

Another practice to which study participants referred was the creation of opportunities for broadening horizons and enriching knowledge, beyond the immediate and formal curriculum. Graduates placed great importance on the ways in which this practice deepened their ability to imagine their near and distant future. A (Maxim Levy) recounts a product development workshop he was a part of: *"they brought a company or organisation called VDC, who are entrepreneurs who train young people. We had actual workshops where we learnt how to develop products, how to present products and how to come up with good ideas."*

They have a market and all that. It was very interesting... **I think it really helped us, because it opened us up to think innovatively...** When you're a student you can get stuck in the framework of classes, homework, school, and when you are offered something different, something beyond, and see what real life is like, it teaches you so much," he continues and points out the significance of such programs as a bridge to the future for young adults from the periphery, saying "it is very suitable for neighborhoods in developing towns, where the world is very narrow, **because we don't have a license for example at that age. We don't get out. We have not been to the army yet and met people from around the country. School is very small, and in the evenings all you do is sit around outside, you don't get exposed to these worlds, if it doesn't come to you from outside the town, your chance of getting exposed to that kind of stuff is nonexistent...**". L (Yarka) also mentions the difference this kind of activities makes for students from the periphery, since it allows them opportunities they would otherwise never have: "going to places I had never gone to before, like competitions, like expeditions abroad through Darca network... for a year through Yes program, we have had several students who did that". L (Yarka).

On top of expanding their horizons through their study, the graduates mentioned broadening their possibilities of imagining their future in the social and community aspects. N (Yarka) says: "we had meetings in 12th grade for acceptance into national service. Some people came to talk to us about the various places we could serve in. At first, I didn't really want to do national service, I preferred to continue with my studies straight away. **But when I talked to a teacher, she opened my eyes to the possibility of taking a break for a year, and help out too**".

#### 4. Social and community initiatives

Another school practice that stood out in the words of the study participants was the inclusion of initiatives and volunteering in the community, in a way that matched the values of leadership and giving back mentioned above. N. (Yarka) refers to the way her teacher took an active part in guiding her community activity and says: "We had a mission to volunteer in our village, so I chose to volunteer in my kindergarten. And the teacher in charge of the project would always ask about it and follow up on it, and give us suggestions for activities we can do for these children".

On closer inspection, this practice seems to have applied the values of which the graduates spoke, and allowed their practical implementation. This mechanism can be identified in the words of A from Lod, who speaks about working alongside people with disabilities: "a few of us from my class were sent to volunteer with people with disabilities. At first, we resisted, we didn't want to do it. We came for the first meeting and were apprehensive. We were kids and it scared us. You see adults behaving like little kids. They touch you, and it was hard to cope with it. We felt at first like we were being forced to do it. Many of us quit. We were left about 10-12.

Even though we felt at first like we were forced, **today I understand how important it was. We met with them every week... we didn't get it at first, we felt disconnected and it was hard to bear. But slowly, after a few visits, we learned to accept them and embrace them. We'd wait for these visits.** You can say, that if we didn't have this, I would have been less tolerant to people with disabilities. I would stay in the state of apprehension and fear. I'm here, you're there. Today, thanks to my volunteering, **I am more attentive and open, more tolerant. It really was an amazing experience. A whole year, every Wednesday, quality time with the same people. You learn to get to know them and their disability, and see beyond the outer shell. Because that's all you can see at first. It was incredible**". (A, Lod)

## 5. Fostering soft skills

The participants spoke about classes dedicated to practicing soft skills such as planning, time management and standing in front of an audience. Dedicating resources to the advancement of these skills is in line with the ambitiousness that characterizes the schools. It is evident from the interviews that the graduates attribute their personal successes to practicing these skills early on.

R (Yarka) addresses in detail his time management skills, attributing it to his high school years: *"the allocation of time is one of the things I actually took from my time in school. Knowing how to divide the time and how to be organised. So we can get everything we want done, and even extra if we allocated time correctly"*.

A (Maxim Levy) elaborates on his planning skills, saying: *"once a year, for example, in the New Year, I write down my goals for the coming year. I think that if there are goals, even I am amazed time and time again, let's say if I set a certain goal for a certain date, when it is written in front of me, and it is clear in my head, I achieve it faster than I actually planned. This is an important skill in my opinion... I think it's something very important, and sometimes, at least at my age, people do not understand the importance of it. **Which leads me to the next point, I feel this is something I definitely got at school. Something I would never have thought about on my own, without external guidance"**. (A, Maxim Levy)*

Another soft skill mentioned by the graduates, to which unique lessons were devoted, was the skill of standing and presenting in front of an audience: *"There were lots and lots of workshops on topics of public speaking or motivation, learning new topics and such" (A, Maxim Levy). L (Yarka), who thinks of himself as an individual who's naturally gifted in this area, attaches great importance to this class activity despite his natural abilities, and says "I have always been a person who likes to stand in front of an audience and speak. But... at the school there were leadership classes which entail public speaking... **I think it was so important, since it allows you to see other people doing it. It allows you to hear feedback and learn to improve and learn from others.** This is something that you really need... Standing up in front of an audience and hear comments which are not always good, accept them and learn to work on your skill. It takes work, and it's a skill... and it is something we learned at school. You get feedback and give feedback to others. It develops a personality... it's so important. I've seen it at university, sometimes you have to stand up and speak your mind and not give in to peer pressure. This is something I acquired at school"*.

## 6. Competition as an obligation for group success

A school practice that was mentioned a lot, especially among Yarka graduates, was the encouragement of a constructive and positive competition. Graduates spoke of a learning experience which fostered a healthy competition between students with regards to their value system and initiative. N says: *"**there was a lot of competition.** Not just in terms of academic achievements. But also about who initiates more. **Who stands out socially, who's the leader, who is busy with this or that project? Who participates in more cultural events at school"**.*

The values of giving back and seeing the other were incorporated into this practice of competitiveness in a way that fostered a climate in which students felt a high sense of commitment to the success of their classmates, as M says: *"I participated in a programming competition and **he (friend) helped me.** He didn't think, 'well, it's not my expertise, so I won't even try to help'. **He really did try to give me as much help as possible.** He had many tips and good ideas. 'Learn from this, look there'"*.

The commitment to the success of the group is evident in all of the graduates' stories. It seems that the message given by the school regarding competition gave rise to reciprocal help and support, and a perception of the group as a team in which every member is obligated to help the others advance. Y says *"I am not interested in oppressing anyone else in order to be considered better. **It could be that I won't reach my fullest potential, but I know that my purpose here on earth is to make the world better.** And if I oppress anyone else in order to be considered better, it is against what I believe in. This is something I got from school. **People helped me. As soon as that happened, I was in a state where I needed their help. I cannot forget how they helped me pass my matriculation exams. I will never forget that. I will never forget that. No chance I will. I could never have hoped for this to happen anywhere else.** People who helped me in 5 units programming, in computer science"*.

Y continues and elaborates about the meaning of the group for his learning process, speaking about setting personal goals by observing his peers' achievements as a driver of success. He emphasizes, *"we were a group who pushed each other. Why? Because at any given moment one of us could be down. But others who were on their best side. So the school essentially functioned like a support group. If anyone was bad, the others cheered him up. Every time you thought or dreamt about something, you would see somebody else aiming higher, or accomplishing something better. We all did 5 units in every subject. We played football, basketball, we did all sorts of things. **When I said I wanted to do five units, and that's enough for me, there was always somebody doing even more than that and aiming even higher. So I say OK, I was also in basketball and football league"**.*

## 7. Reputation

The reputation of the school was mentioned substantially in the graduates' stories, mostly by Yarka graduates. The school graduates mentioned their pride among the community and family, stressing the acceptance process as a significant component of the school's reputation. Y (Yarka) says: *"when I arrived at the school, in 10th grade, that people who are accepted are like an elite army unit, and if you went to an elite unit you immediately become a market leader. All of us at the school, we found out we are the best brains. The smartest people among the Druze, for sure. These are people who are not less than the highest national level. In fact. Now, if you can't deal with that, it can eat you up. There are so many pressures to be the best. You have to understand mentally and psychologically that even if you are the worst at this school, you are still better than others. **It is the cream of the crop.** You have to have some perspective. **This is one thing we learned here.**" (Y, Yarka)*

The issue of the entry exams and the pride that comes with passing them, came up also in M's story, especially with regards to family pride. She says: *"there are so many tests. In Arabic, Hebrew, English. Maths and psycho-technical test... and only two of us got accepted. It was so fun. Like I knew. That's it. If I get accepted there... my parents were so proud of me"*.

The school's reputation and the issue of entrance exams was also mentioned by Yarka graduates with regards to the status of the school in the community. It is clear from their remarks that the school's reputation was known as a place that guarantees the future of its graduates as potential leaders of the Druze community. N, for example, stresses this aspect, saying: *"There was constant talk about the school. It was talked about as the best school, the best place, with the best learning atmosphere, and the best springboard for your career. **There is the infrastructure, the pride... it was a kind of competition.** Yes, that we must prove ourselves and be the pride of the village."*

## ◇ Management Practices:

### 1. Involvement

The school principal was perceived by the graduates as being involved and engaged, both in overall educational processes in the school, and in terms of the daily lives of students. This involvement is talked about by the graduates with admiration, and out of a great sense of appreciation for the work of the principal. Moreover, the school principal's hands on involvement is often described as an engine of personal growth for the students, during their studies and later in their adult lives.

L (Begin) describes the involvement of the administration in school processes led by students, relating: *"we would also meet once a month with the principal (as part of the student council). The school principal R would meet with me and my two deputies once a month, and we would update each other. It actually seemed she cared. Today I'm thinking, how does a principal have time to meet students for 45 minutes? It was important for me"*.

A (Maxim Levy) illustrates the involvement of the principal with specific students, saying: *"I remember we had to do a young lawyers project, where we had to simulate a trial. It is called a simulated trial. There was one girl who was too shy, and didn't want to speak in front of a full auditorium. **I remember that the principal really pushed her to do it, reinforced her and encouraged her, and didn't give up. It is really at the individual level.** The school principal really cares at the individual level. In a place like Lod, this is something that can change your life"*. N describes a similar experience: *"I really appreciate the school principal. He was exceptional, amazing, and always supported us in anything we wanted to do. When he discovered I was writing books, he invited me for a meeting in his office. I was so anxious, I barely spoke about myself, so he asked me questions to help me feel comfortable to talk about it."*

### 2. Open Door policy

Another popular practice involving the principal which came up a lot was his/her availability to students. This availability was dubbed by the graduates as an "open door policy" and was related in their interviews as a feeling that the school principal is always accessible and free to listen and assist in school matters or personal matters. A (Maxim Levy) describes this policy, saying: *"our principal, she was something else. Now I do believe that you can recreate this success, but a lot of it was also her... There was just something about her personality... **Always an open door. You could always approach her.** Something about her was just very accessible"*. L (Yarka) adds: *"If I needed the principal, I could just walk in, knock on his door and come in and talk. He was fine with that. As if he didn't have to work, as if he had a lot of spare time, although he was swamped with work. He had many meetings, and everyone wanted to see him, but he always made sure to have time for his students. **This is something I think should be preserved at school, because it made a huge difference, receiving this personal attention from the principal, and feeling comfortable enough to discuss the most intimate matters with him"**.*

## ◇ Educational Staff Practices:

An aspect which stood out in the graduates' stories, was the pedagogical capabilities of the teaching staff. An analysis of the interviews produced a number of teaching practices and capabilities, as follows:

### 1. Diverse Experiences

The educational staff acts out of an obligation to teaching which employs diverse methods. Graduates mentioned that learning at school was done through creating experiences, from which the principles of the subject matter were derived. In a way which creates a personal connection of the students to the subject matter, encouraging investigation and personal research. L (Yarka): *"The teachers knew how to deliver the message. **How to turn it into something tangible, although you can't really feel it. You cannot really feel Newton's Law. But at school, the teachers give you so many opportunities to ask, be curious, find out more - where does it come from? What is the origin of this law? So, it makes you really connect to it...**"*

D (Maxim Levy) elaborates on the teaching methods in history class. In addition to real-time teaching methods, D mentions the fact that thanks to her teacher's methods, she managed to internalize and maintain the subject matter until now, and so she says: *"let's take history. My class teacher was also my history teacher. **She was a creative person, and she tried to deliver the material in ways that go beyond just reading and memorizing mountains of text.** She would make little summaries and charts. It helped me a lot. I think I still have it at home, because I loved it. **I can still remember the War of Independence. We made this kind of W about that war. I still have it today, sitting in my closet. I enjoyed it a lot.** She would make charts and drawings, instead of memorizing it all and just puking it all out in the matriculation exams. We actually learned and enjoyed it... I felt the teachers really tried generally to get into the meaning of things and explain what's behind it all. I am happy they did, because it made me do my own research often, it got me curious, it was amazing..."*

### 2. Critical thinking and pluralism

Another practice was nurturing critical thinking and pluralism. Respondents mentioned lively discussions in class which led to open mindedness and cognitive flexibility, which in turn led to a deeper comprehension of the subject matter. Furthermore, respondents pointed out that this practice improved their discussion skills, like forming an opinion, structuring an argument and tolerance. A (Ramon): *"**Students would present a certain topic from their point of view, and it was fine to disagree.** Legitimate. **The teachers never said 'this is the correct view'.** They want you to think about things from a different perspective. Look at them in a different light. R, my class teacher, was possibly the best teacher I had ever had in my life. Not just in terms of personality, I mean in terms of teaching methods. She would constantly make us see the other side of the coin. We had projects involving the Arab community. **We also had other projects which encouraged thinking outside of the public consensus. Many times it was not popular opinions.** She would happily present them to class, not as her own opinion, but as an opinion which must be taken into account. Let's see how you handle it. It caused an uproar many times, and heated discussions. But it was alright. It is a part of the learning process. I only saw it as a good thing. **Even when it caused a stir, it means it touched something in them, triggered them, and when that happens you might get upset, but it also means that you will contemplate it and think about it. Even if not at that moment.** If you are not mature enough to think about it differently in that moment, you will later on. Which kept our conversations going later"*

A (Maxim Levy) elaborates on the critical thinking aspect, attributing his formation as a contemplative person, the formulation of his identity, to these experiences in class, saying: *"we discussed current affairs a lot, as well as politics. I feel it did open my mind. I think it's important that teachers talk about current affairs and even let their views be known. It's an invitation for interesting discussions. This was a dominant thing at my school. To develop discussions, express our opinions, not only on political issues, maybe also other current affairs, but the point was to express your views openly. To listen to each other. It helps. It helped me formulate my own opinions and shaped me as a person"*.

### 3. Autonomy in learning processes

Participants spoke of their position within the study process at school. According to them, the teaching staff encouraged students to play an active role in value-based learning, as N (Yarka) says: *"Once, in a bad period with many disciplinary issues, the teacher asked me to say a few words to the students, on my thoughts about the situation, and how do I think it can be improved. I mean, who am I to tell them? Am I an educator? Well, at the end of my talk, there was some positive feedback. Students came up to me in the break..."*. This issue was also reflected in the words of A (Maxim Levy): *"I think it is all about taking the students seriously. I think our school treated us less as students, and more as people. One of them. **In the sense that I could come and say, listen guys, there's something wrong here, let's help out and let's fix this.** It was so important, it should happen in every school. The fact that we were students did not mean you can just do whatever you want with us"*.

Encouragement for involvement in the learning process was also reflected in class, with regards to the subject matter, as described by L (Begin): *"It was not just about teachers writing on the board. Not at all. There were videos and presentations, and activities. There was more room for students to express themselves. Our teachers gave us the stage all the time, as students. **To say what we think, to participate.** It was never a one-man show. It was not about a teacher giving a lecture. We were very curious, we wanted to speak and express ourselves, and the teachers welcomed that"*.

### 4. "Give them a fishing rod, rather than fish" - nurturing good learning habits

Participants addressed teaching practices which encouraged personal study. Graduates described how teachers always stressed the learning process, rather than the results, to allow for development of good study and research habits, for growth and improvement. S (New High School) elaborates: *"The thing that makes a student think. Make mistakes. It is ok, make mistakes in class, in a test, the most important thing is that you learn from it. **Grades are not the predestined. Not at all. The objective is to learn. To have tools.** Acquire these tools, it is so important. I did indeed acquire tools from my teacher. No doubt"*.

A (Maxim Levy) talks about the importance placed by the educational staff on the process the students should go through, and especially how they encouraged them to take the initiative rather than be passive learners. In his remarks he stressed that the most important element in learning was *"initiative, especially initiative. Because at the end, what all these school programs had in common, was that they had an end product. The final product would only be created if we ourselves invested thought, planning and execution. I think at that age, it is one of the most crucial things. **To take initiative, develop and think for yourself.** Not just be fed with a spoon, it is crucial in my opinion"*.

N (Yarka) elaborates about the reflective skills he developed as a result of being encouraged to develop self-investigation habits: *"I was an observing student. I had my moments of quiet. Those moments when I would think, be alone, process what I had been through during the day. I had this end-of-day ritual, in bed, a short analysis. What was good today? What was not good? Socially and academically. What made you feel good, and you want to preserve, and what made you feel bad and you'd like to improve? I think it was my father. I think that exercise really helped me. My class teacher taught me this technique, and it had a great impact on me. She used to say it to us all the time. Some students followed her advice. Some didn't. I was one of those who did follow her advice.. It really helped me. I still practice it, to this day, even in my current complex roles, when I have to deal with manpower, a lot of dynamics and events and meetings and overload... these are very difficult hours... and you also treat people while you're at it, since you're a doctor, so it's something that's really helping me"*.

Yarka graduates alluded to this practice at length, emphasizing that the teaching methods in their high school prepared them for independent study, which they were later required to do regularly as university students. *"He displays it on the screen, projects it, and then starts explaining it to us, and we take notes if we need to, and we get all the material at the end. It is similar to university routines. It is the same procedure. You don't really need to write it all down, you have it ready. The teachers comment on the material, you write down notes, and that's it. They tried their best to prepare us for university"*. (M, Yarka). R (Yarka) expands on this theme and recounts how the teaching methods in her high school (and not necessarily the academic level) enabled her to properly prepare for university, compared to her friends, and says: *"In terms of studies it was really, really good. I can say that the learning atmosphere at the school really helped me study well today. I don't feel as though I encountered something completely new as a student. I don't feel such a big difference. They prepared us so well for it at school. Prepared us for academia. It helps me so much today. I see myself so different than the other students here, who are about the same age or even older. I can see how much more prepared I am, and confident that I can deal with the study challenges. It is reflected in my grades too, which are affected by my experience in high school"*. (R, Yarka)

## 5. "Don't give up on anyone"

The graduates' interviews are packed with descriptions about an educational policy according to which "you do not give up on anyone". In practice, the educational staff seemed to fight for every pupil in the school, striving to advance their academic achievements and help them realize the potential inherent in each and every one of them. According to them, this was a sweeping policy towards all students at the schools, and especially towards "difficult" students, or those with low motivation.

A (Ramon) says: *"the teachers were so caring. They never gave up on anyone. It can be honestly said that any student who wanted to pass, did, some don't want and that's fine, nothing to do about that. At the end of the day you are a teacher, not a magician. You can give it a hundred percent, but you need two to tango. If the other side doesn't even give twenty percent, even if you give two hundred, he won't make it"*. H (Ramon) adds: *"the teachers really did fight for some students, I felt"*.

S (New High School) illustrates this through a specific teacher, and attributes his present achievements to this teacher's persistence about his academic success. He says: *"my teacher was an example of a teacher who fights for you. He didn't let me run away. Whatever happens. He wouldn't let me. He just wanted to continue. Today, I am grateful about it. An amazing teacher, really. I think a big part of where I am today is thanks to him"*.

This core value is also evident in the teaching methods employed by the educational staff, who actively encouraged achievements and academic excellence among each and every student in the school, and even invested extensive resources of time and knowledge to guarantee it. The graduates' accounts on this matter highlight this feeling that teachers believed in the students, and insisted on each one of them, right down to the last student. M (Rene Cassin) says: *"the teacher invested in each and every student. He would stay late to study with me for the test, and wouldn't go home until I was able to solve the exercise. He used to say 'I'll explain again and again, if you need it'. So, I hated maths, but I loved learning maths with him. I mean... It's unbelievable"*. A (Ramon) says: *"there was this teacher, S, I don't know if she's still around... She pushed me a lot. If I got 80, she'd say I can do better. Like, really pushed me to excel. I really liked her classes. It was real fun to be in her class. The teachers believed that every student is capable. They didn't give up on anyone. In other places, it is the easiest thing to say 'you are not good enough for five units, you need to go down to four'. There (in Ramon), it is the opposite. Let's keep you in five, let's fight, stay in five, don't give up. We were the only year level that... I remember, we didn't even have three units in maths. Two groups of five units and one of four units, it was exceptional"*.

## 6. "Seeing the person beyond the student"

The graduates describe a holistic approach by the educational staff towards the students. They reported on an involvement and support by the teachers in all areas of students' lives, beyond the academic sphere, including personal, family and social matters. This involvement is mainly mentioned in the context of crises and moments of distress typical of adolescence, and expressed in terms of emotional support and operative assistance. For example, L (Yarka) says, *"This is something I really felt at school, in the hardest times, the busiest moments... I had days when I would leave the house at seven in the morning and come back at eleven at night, because I had a job, I volunteered, I had studies, tutorials marathons, and the teachers would see it and tell me, come in if you need a chat"*.

**Y (Makif He) says she received administrative help before she joined the army: "I wanted to serve in the Intelligence Corps, to have a B plan. There were many teachers who were former army people, who helped me a lot in the process. When a candidate gets to that stage, it gets very hard. You don't know who to turn to. So, when I approached the teachers, they explained how to do it, and talk to someone they knew if they could. It is not obvious that they would go that extra mile. **The school took responsibility even for things it didn't have to.** Which is not to be taken for granted"**. A (Ramon) illustrates that aspect too, when he says: **"My teaching staff, at least for example the linguistics teacher, would go that extra mile and call some of my 'difficult' friends in the morning to wake them up for school. It is not obvious that they would go that extra mile"**.

L (Ramon) describes personal assistance she received from teachers and says, *"it wasn't just me. Students would approach teachers with personal problems and always get support. I didn't always interact with teachers about personal matters, but anyone who ever needed anything beyond school-related issues, got the help they needed"*.

## C. Emotional

The values and practices described above, created positive emotions among the alumni, which helped shape their entire learning experience. These emotional aspects were described with respect to the school atmosphere and climate, towards the educational staff and the social age group.

### 1. Sense of belonging, family and friendship

From an emotional aspect, the learning experience at the Darca network schools, was portrayed by participants in terms of belonging, family and friendship. The source of this emotional experience is the students' personal acquaintance with the administration, the teaching staff and the other students at the school, along with their sense of security that "there is someone you can rely on if needed". A (Maxim Levy) says: *"there was a strong sense of belonging to the place. A sense of security. That the school really embraced me, that I had somewhere to turn if I needed anything. I emphasize the family element because it really did feel like family. That was how I experienced it. When I had any problem, I could easily ask for help... Didn't have to think about it too much, and there was always an open door. I would sit around with the teachers on my break, and just hang out. I wouldn't have to hesitate if I needed any help".* "It was a very warm place, like family," says D (Maxim Levy), adding: *"we had such a friendly experience, I knew all the teachers, would say good morning to them even if they don't teach me. Sometimes, I would sit down for a chat with teachers. I felt at home".* A (Maxim Levy) also said: *"I think the school gave us a lot of security, it was not just 'hey guys, here's the material, memorize it, bye'. It was more like a family... We'd sit in group together, also after school hours, and study with the teacher's help. It was easier to learn, since it felt like a family".* Y (Makif He) stresses the value of friendship, saying: *"we were very attached to the teacher and to each other. We still have an active WhatsApp group. So, yes, it was a beautiful period, in terms of friendships. When I was in 7th grade, before I joined this class, I heard it was all about school and very competitive and driven, but it was not at all like this. Values and friendship were in fact very important".* H (Yarka) also emphasizes the social aspect, saying: *"friends were one of the most important things for me at that school. There was such a friendly vibe there".*

### 2. Happiness and fun

The learning experience at the Darca network schools, was described by participants as fun and happy. The conversation about their school years flooded the graduates with pleasant memories and longing, and some even called that period *"my most beautiful years"* (A, Maxim Levy). Here are a few more examples: *"It was fun to come to school. Undoubtedly"* (S, New High School); *"There were people at school whom it was just fun to meet every morning... you felt you wanted to be there. I was happy being there".* (N, Yarka); *"It was excellent... Everyone was always happy to come to school. Nobody would get up and go to school bitter".* (A, Ramon).

### 3. Reciprocity

Alongside the emotional aspects, attributed by the alumni to the overall school climate, they also remarked about the unique emotional aspects of the relationships with their teachers. The graduates described teachers' close interpersonal relationship with students, which was talked about in terms of **sharing, reciprocity and even friendship**. Some of them described the relationships as happening at 'eye level'. Among other things, the teachers apparently used personal gestures and shared personal experiences from their own lives, in order to create intimacy with the students and promote their motivation for learning.

M (Yarka), for example, describes the overall experience with the educational staff and says: “we did not really feel there was a teacher-student relationship. It was more friendly. The whole teaching staff”. R (Yarka) also describes it in similar terms: “I was connected to everyone, the principal and the teachers. They were really close to me. You didn’t feel this distance between the principal and the students or teachers. **There was a real dialogue, even friendship sometimes, and it made it all much more fun and made us feel like coming to school and putting a lot of effort into our studies and develop ourselves.** It really helped me personally to develop, and do what I needed. I felt they were always on my side, that if I wanted to do anything, they would be there to help”. N (Yarka) says: “**the teachers were like friends.** Not just authoritative teachers. I felt comfortable to talk to my class teacher about my personal life...”

A (Maxim Levy) recounts a personal experience in which “the teacher wrote me a greeting card saying he was so happy to have been my class teacher, that he learned a lot from me, and that when we talked he felt like he was talking to another adult. When I got the card and read it at home, I felt shivers, I was so moved. **I felt it was a mutual thing. I really felt we both appreciated each other. Helped each other learn and progress.** I guess I must have given him something”. Y (Makif He) describes a strategy of inspiring reciprocity, saying: “I remember the teacher telling us personal things, about maths, about her army service, she would share things with us and it helped us connect, both to the subject matter and to her”.

#### 4. Care, concern and love

In their interviews, the graduates described pleasant memories of feeling cared for by teachers, and even feeling warmth and love. Some of them spoke of their relationships with the teachers as one would describe a relationship with a parent. A (Ramon): “care is the key word. **They cared about us, they loved us, appreciated us and believed in us.** They wanted us to succeed”. A (Maxim Levy) says: “**I felt that my teacher took on a maternal role here at school.** She was very dominant. She knew everyone’s problems. Her office was always open, literally, her door was always open. We’d come and sit there during our breaks... she was like a mother figure at school”. A (Ramon) describes his teacher, saying: “from my experience, she was a very fair, warm and loving person”.

This emotional foundation from the teachers gave rise to similar emotions in the students, and encouraged them to learn out of appreciation and respect. A (Ramon): “we had an amazing teaching staff. All of them. They cared. They made an effort for us and gave their hearts and their souls out for us, and the best they had to offer. It makes you really appreciate them as a student. Not just me. 95 percent of the students in our level loved their teachers and appreciated them all, even if they disagreed sometimes”.

## Discussion

This report summarises the learning experience of 22 Darca network alumni, in the years following their graduation. The purpose of the report was to describe and analyze the educational endeavors in the network's schools, focusing on factors that nurture successfully functioning graduates, active, responsible and involved citizens who lead a rich and meaningful life. The report's findings are anchored in up-to-date and relevant theoretical bases, in the field of career and social emotional learning (SEL).

The network graduate's profile, as depicted in the interviews, is characterized by a strong inner motivation for success and excellence, in productive areas of life, like work and studies. Alongside this characteristic, the graduates described an impressive ability to lead a broad and rich lifestyle - one that combines demanding work and study roles with "serious" leisure, and other, broader life roles, like involvement in family life and commitment to social and community activity. This tapestry of life roles corresponds with the contextual approaches in the career field.

**Contextual approaches in the career field emphasize the need for a broad perspective, which allows to address several spheres of life simultaneously, while being sensitive and appreciative of the natural advantages inherent in the interactions between different spheres of life and the world of work (e.g. Savickas, 2005; Super, 1990).** Cinamon emphasizes in her research the conflictual and enriching interaction which takes place between work and family, whereby occupational tasks interfere with family tasks and vice versa, while positive skills and moods in one role enrich and improve the functioning in the other role. She furthermore emphasizes the relevance of research in this field from a developmental aspect. Her studies suggest that adolescents (Cinamon & Rich, 2014) and young adults (Cinamon & Rich, 2010) are aware of these complex relationships between work and family roles and take them into consideration *in their future plans*. On the basis of these studies, she argues that *this broad and integrative view should be established in the research and practice of career counseling and education already in early developmental stages, such as during adolescence (Cinamon and Rich, 2004).*

Cinamon's approach is supported by the graduates' accounts. The graduates show an impressive ability to balance different life roles, and attribute this ability to their school years. It is evident from their stories that the educational practices in the schools encouraged an integration of different roles, as well as created and fostered opportunities for a rich and integrative lifestyle. That is, alongside encouragement and even a demand for involvement in the learner's roles and in social and community roles, educational practices were incorporated that gave students tools for doing so (e.g., a time management workshop), and enabled an enriching interaction between the roles.

The descriptions of graduates' extensive activity demonstrated **strong confidence and faith** in their ability to excel in productive areas of their lives, like work and studies, and the ability to combine them successfully. This developmental component refers to the theoretical term self efficacy in career development. The origin of the term is the social cognitive career theory (The Social Cognitive Career Theory; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994; 2002), which is based on Bandura's work ( Bandura, 1986, 1977 ). As part of this theory, self efficacy for performing a specific academic or professional task was defined. This belief predicts a person's willingness to start studying or working in these areas, his ability to persevere with tasks and his emotional response to possible roadblocks and conflicts along the way.

The Darca network alumni presented three main types of career self-efficacy: occupational self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and self-efficacy for balancing life roles. **Occupational self-efficacy** is defined as the individual's belief in his ability to successfully fulfill the tasks involved in his work (; Schyns & von Collani, 2002 2008 Rigotti et al.), such as the ability to find multiple solutions to a problem at work, or the ability to achieve goals at work. **Academic self-efficacy** is defined as the individual's belief in the ability to successfully meet an academic assignment or achieve any other academic goal (Bandura, 1997; Wigfield et al., 2015). Based on Frone's work-family relationship model ( Frone, 2003 ), Cinamon defined the concept of self-efficacy for managing work and family roles as an individual's belief in his or her ability to deal with future conflict between family and work roles (e.g., Cinamon, 2006, 2009), alongside his belief in the ability to create enriching interactions between them ( Cinamon, 2012 ). Based on this definition, **the self-efficacy for integrating life roles** is defined as the individual's belief in his or her ability to successfully manage multiple life roles, addressing future conflicts that may come up, alongside possible enriching relationships.

Career researchers have highlighted the role of perceptions regarding career self-efficacy in promoting a 'future orientation' and life satisfaction. **'Future Orientation'** refers to the perception of the future, which is defined, according to Seginer (Seginer, 1988), as consisting of the plans, aspirations, expectations and fears of the individual, regarding possible events in various areas of life in the near and distant future. Studies that have focused on examining the prerequisites for the development of perceptions of the future, have highlighted the importance of the concept of self-efficacy. Bandura (Bandura, 1995), for example, described **the relationship between self-efficacy and expectations for results, which are an expression of a perception of the future**. According to him, self-efficacy shapes expectations for outcomes. That is, people who believe they can create change, recognize the continuity that exists between their actions and the future results of their actions, and therefore have a stronger commitment to shaping their future (Bandura, 1997). Perceptions about self-efficacy play a central role even in shaping dimensions of quality of life. Accordingly, the cognitive social model for work and life satisfaction (Lent & Brown, 2006, 2008) emphasizes the **contribution of career self-efficacy to a sense of satisfaction with work and life**.

An analysis of the findings of the study shows that the career self-efficacy portrayed in the graduates' stories, is a key element in shaping their personality. Accordingly, self-efficacy was noted by graduates as the basis for constructing a clear orientation of the future, one that includes clear goals and objectives in a variety of areas of life, alongside a general sense of life satisfaction. In other words, the belief in their ability to work, learn and combine life roles, was a key factor in their ability to set future goals and objectives in a variety of areas of life, with contentment and satisfaction. These developmental products are impressive relative to the typical characteristics of the young adulthood period (to which the graduates belong), as described in the introduction.

The fact that the network's graduates attribute their functional "successes" to their school years, reinforces the second part of the study findings chapter, which points to the value system and behavioral and emotional framework within the Darca network schools, as the developmental engine of growth in the graduates. This framework reveals, as stated, a movement which originates in a strong value system, which serves as a cornerstone for the construction and implementation of educational practices. These values and practices served as an engine for the development of positive emotional experiences among the students. The practical aspect of the educational work at the Darca schools enhances social and emotional skills as part of the learning process. Similar educational principles are demonstrated by current pedagogical theories, of which one of the most prominent is the conceptual framework suggested by the theory of Social Emotional learning (SEL).

Over the last two decades, educators called for SEL at schools. The leading organization for the promotion of emotional-social learning (CASEL; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2020) defined social emotional learning as a process through which children and adults acquire and apply knowledge, skills and attitudes, in order to develop a healthy self-identity; manage emotions; achieve personal and collective goals; feel and show empathy; establish and maintain supportive relationships; make decisions responsibly and with care.

CASEL showcases the interaction inherent between the school climate and the principles of SEL. Accordingly, investing resources in pedagogical components of the emotional-social nature, promotes a school climate in which students and educators can feel involved and belong to the school, and enjoy mutual support and respect. At the same time, SEL is dependent on the school climate in order to occur.

Moreover, teaching occurs most effectively in nurturing and safe environments characterized by **a positive and caring relationship between teachers and students**. In order to enable teaching which is adapted to the culture and the developmental stage, teachers must identify and appreciate the specific strengths and needs of each student, and support the students' identities. When teachers combine students' cultural backgrounds and personal experiences and seek out and encourage their contribution, they create an educational environment in which students are involved in the educational process, which further increases students' involvement and contributes to skills development. A positive relationship and a strong bond between teachers and students enable joint learning, foster development and growth of both teachers and students, and promote collaboration between them in finding solutions for common issues that concern both students and teachers.

The conceptual framework proposed by CASEL also addresses the aspect of applying the principles of social and emotional learning in the classrooms. According to the organization's recommendations, social emotional learning skills can be promoted through the use of a variety of classroom approaches, among them collaborative learning and project-based learning; direct instruction on the acquisition and practice of social emotional skills, in a sensitive manner and tailored to the developmental stage, context, and culture; integrating social and emotional learning into the subject matter in the different disciplines.

The findings of the current report reflect these practical aspects proposed by the conceptual framework of social emotional learning, and showcase their application in the Darca network schools in three aspects: systemic, managerial, and pedagogical (the educational staff). In the systemic aspect, the practices noted by the network's graduates reflected a small and familiar study setting, which promotes a sense of belonging. The school promoted respectful relationships through a system of supportive boundaries, i.e. clear rules of conduct within a flexible framework tailored to individual needs. Another systemic practice was social and community projects-based learning. In addition, the school incorporated direct teaching of social emotional skills (such as time management and standing in front of an audience).

At the managerial level, one practice stood out, which is the creation of a nurturing and safe environment, through the positive and caring relationship between the school principal and the students. This practice has been described by the alumni as administrative involvement in educational processes and events, and in the personal needs of students, as well as an "open door" policy, which signified availability.

Just like the principal, the educational staff established positive relationships with the students. These relationships enjoyed familiarity and reciprocity, and constituted a substantial emotional and operational basis of support for the students. The findings also emphasized diverse teaching practices employed by the teachers. In addition, there is an evident integration of direct teaching of social emotional learning in the formal curriculum, such as fostering learning habits, and encouraging critical thinking and pluralism (especially in civel classes). Student involvement in learning processes through encouragement of autonomy was also emphasized.

The assumption underlying social emotional learning theory (SEL) states that students' ability to manage their emotions, respond effectively to others' emotions, and regulate their behaviors in a social context, is critical to their success in school and in the rest of their adult lives as future citizens. Moreover, developing abilities in the social and emotional sphere will also support and develop abilities in the career sphere. Indeed, clear interfaces can be identified in the system of skills required for social emotional learning (SEL) and those required for career education. Thus, based on a holistic approach to development, combining aspects of career with aspects of social emotional learning during adolescence, may promote healthy and optimal development later in adult life (Howard & Ferrari, 2021).

As mentioned above, the findings of the study highlight **the place of emotions in learning processes and career development**. Studies that have addressed the role of emotions in career development processes (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011; Flum & Blustein, 2000) maintained that an individual's interests develop as a product of positive or negative emotions. That is, individuals choose their paths of development based on the emotions that these paths or spheres of interest trigger in them. A literature review conducted by Oliveira, Távira and Porfeli (Oliveira, Taveira & Porfeli, 2015) led them to argue that these emotions are related to patterns of motivation and behavior in the course of career development. Hartung (2011) argued that focusing on motivation and on the link between emotion and motivation, may form the basis for creating a model that will explain how emotions imbue an individual's life paths with meaning. That is, the explanation people give themselves regarding their educational choices, leisure choices, and employment choices later on.

The findings of the present study demonstrate how positive emotions towards the learning process in the school, have imbued the life paths of Darca graduates with meaning, and even influenced them. The graduates described feelings of belonging, joy and enjoyment towards the overall learning, alongside feelings of reciprocity, caring and concern with regards to the teaching staff. These emotional aspects are crucial for academic success, and may explain both graduates' ongoing connection to their former institutions, and their desire to continue to engage in learning, giving and development.

## Summary and Recommendations

A Darca network graduate, as depicted by the present study, is characterized by a stable and clear value base, which places achievement and excellence in the center, alongside social and cultural belonging. These values are accompanied by an impressive ability to manage a rich and broad lifestyle and to formulate a clear 'future orientation', which includes aspirations for management and leadership, alongside a significant contribution to society and the community.

An in-depth analysis of the study findings reveals a key developmental component which fostered these characteristics in the graduates - self-efficacy in career. This component refers to graduates' self-belief in their ability to succeed in occupational / academic contexts, marital contexts, and in combining a variety of life roles, including work / studies, family, community and leisure. Accordingly, self-efficacy in career has provided a basis for graduates, for constructing a clear future orientation, one that includes clear goals and objectives in a variety of spheres of life, alongside a general sense of life satisfaction. These developmental products are impressive, relative to the characteristics of the young adulthood life period (to which the graduates belong), as described above in the introduction, and indicate effective exploratory processes.

**The network's graduates attribute their successful performance, among other things, to their period at the school. This reinforces the second part of the study findings chapter, which points to the value system and behavioral and emotional framework within the Darca network schools, as the developmental engine of growth in the graduates.** This framework reveals a movement which originates in a strong value system, which serves as a cornerstone for the construction and implementation of educational practices. These values and practices served as an engine for the development of positive emotional experiences among the students (see Table 1). The value base includes drive and excellence, leadership and visibility, alongside humanistic values of giving back and seeing the other. In addition to these, the graduates emphasized values of belief in the student (self-efficacy in learning), seeing the student in a holistic view, the teacher as an expert, teaching as a calling and dedication to teaching. These values constituted a basis for practices at the system level, managerial level and for the use of the teaching staff. These practices correspond to up-to-date educational approaches, and especially with social emotional learning (SEL). This value-based and practical system motivated a generated a positive emotional experience among the students, expressed through feelings of belonging and joy towards the school, and feelings of reciprocity, caring and love towards the teaching staff.

**These findings may serve as a rich raw material for enhancing and improving the educational practices in the network's schools.** In order to do so, we recommend a few operational actions. As a first step, we recommend presenting the main findings in various forums across the network, including the network management and the administrative staff of the schools. Subsequently, it is important and recommended to use the findings of the report to enhance and improve the educational work within the schools. Accordingly, the findings of the study should be presented to the educational staffs in the schools, emphasizing graduates' characteristics and the value-based, practical and emotional framework that promoted it. This should be done in order to examine the findings in context of the educational practices in each school, at both the system and personal levels. This process will consist of four main parts: a) Studying the optimal graduate profile, as a "compass" for educational work, b) Studying the value system proposed in the study, as a basis for examining and formulating an adapted and relevant specific school value system, c) Studying the proposed practices, at the systemic, managerial and personal (the educational staff) level, with the intention of defining and expanding on existing practices at the school, and d) Studying the emotional components described in the study, and examining the extent to which these and other emotional aspects are implemented in the school's educational work. These elements, of carefully studying and processing the findings, may turn the educational endeavor into a more conscious effort, and therefore more structured and effective.

## Discussion Points

The analysis of the interviews raised two main points which were described by the graduates, but were not emphasized in the findings section. The first refers to the place of the family in the educational process in the network's schools, and the second focuses on the practice of admission tests specifically in the Yarka school model.

An examination of the learning experience from the point of view of the graduates did not find a spontaneous reference (on the part of the interviewees) to **the place of the family in the educational process**. A spontaneous discussion regarding the family occurred separately from the discussion of the learning experience, and focused primarily on family values that promote achievement and excellence, as well as on the school's reputation and family pride. Moreover, in response to a direct question regarding the school's connection to the parents, the graduates noted only a basic contact with the parents, with the intention of developing personal accountability among the students. H (Yarka) says for example: *"There was contact with the parents when there had to be. In the right time. I didn't always want my family to know everything that was going on in school. I wasn't always the best student. I had difficulties. That was the best thing. They gave me chances. Gave me responsibility, 'improve, get better, pull yourself by the bootstraps'. That was good. You don't need to involve the parents in every little thing"*.

However, various pedagogical approaches, including SEL mentioned above, emphasize the central importance of the family in the educational process. In light of this, we recommend conducting systemic thinking on the subject, with the aim of defining the principles of cooperation with the family at key intersections throughout a student's life in the network's schools.

The issue of the entrance exams was described only by Yarka graduates. This educational practice has been mentioned by graduates in the context of the school's "reputation," and deemed as an effective practice. Accordingly, success in the entrance exams to the Yarka school served as a source of personal and family pride, and signified a promise for a "successful life." On the other hand, this practice may lead to emotional complexity (for those who do not pass the test) at an anyway sensitive and challenging developmental stage, as well as challenges in broader family and community contexts. For example, in a situation in which one of the children in the family does not successfully pass the entrance exams, while his older siblings did. This may cause tensions in the family and even outside of it - in the wider community.

The first issue, the place of the family in the educational process of students in the Network's schools, may be significant to the improvement of educational practices in the network's schools, and we therefore recommend that it be brought up for discussion in relevant forums, in both systemic and personal contexts. The second issue, the practice of admission tests, is only specifically applicable to the Yarka school, as all of Darca's schools intentionally serve their community with an open model, accepting and serving as an educational home to students of all abilities.

## Recommendations for Additional Research

It is recommended to conduct a study that will examine the learning experience in Darca schools, using current Darca students as the sample participants of the study. This type of research will focus on the characteristics of adolescence, and allow a broader perspective regarding the educational components which underlie the pedagogical endeavors in the network's schools.

It is also recommended to examine the teaching experience of the school staff - both the administration and the educational staff. This perspective may complete the overall picture of the educational endeavors in the network's schools.

Given the nature of the study, it is recommended to incorporate quantitative research methods, to allow the examination of relevant variables in a wider scope of participants.

# Appendix 1 - Interview Protocol

Sub-questions	Anchor Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell us about your <b>job</b> (intended for graduates who are integrated into the job market after acquiring an academic education) - the workplace, your position, the number of work hours per week, the degree of personal investment, salary, achievements, climate, organizational culture, contact with colleagues, employer attitude and more.</li> <li>• Tell us about your <b>study experience</b> in academia - field of study, number of hours per week, degree of personal investment, achievements, climate, organizational culture, contact with fellow students, the attitude of the lecturers and more.</li> <li>• What is your <b>marital status</b>? - Romantic relationships and parenting</li> <li>• Describe your <b>social</b> life - how would you define it? What place do friends take up in your life?</li> <li>• Describe your free time - what do you do for <b>recreation</b>? How many hours a week? What does leisure mean in your life?</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Tell us about yourself</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell us about the educational staff at your high school. Where they of any assistance to you? How so? Demonstrate</li> <li>• Tell us about the teaching methods at your high school. What made them unique? Were they effective? How so? Elaborate</li> <li>• Describe the learning atmosphere at the school. Did this atmosphere help develop and promote you? Explain</li> <li>• Describe the learning environment. What did the school look like?</li> <li>• Looking back, which values did you acquire at school? How did they help you?</li> <li>• Tell us about the contact between your school and your home. Did it assist your learning in any way?</li> <li>• Describe how <b>involved you were</b> within the school. How did you contribute? How were your influential at school?</li> <li>• What would you like to add with regards to school and the factors which helped you succeed?</li> </ul> <p><b>Finally,</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What title would you give your learning experience?</li> <li>• What emotions come to mind when you think about your school?</li> <li>• Do you think that your learning experience was affected by your social and geographical background? Or specifically to your attendance of a Darca school? How so?</li> <li>• What would you advise to a student at a Darca school who wishes to succeed? Would you go back in time?</li> <li>• What would you advise to the educational staff? <b>If you were a teacher at a Darca school, your own teacher, what would you preserve and what would you change?</b> Anything with regards to the school management? Anything with regards to the Darca school network management?</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Tell us about your learning experience at your Darca school</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to imagine a day in your life in x years. Mention work, studies, family, leisure, social life and community.</li> <li>• How strongly do you believe you will be able to attain these goals?</li> <li>• What would assist you?</li> <li>• What could stand in your way?</li> <li>• Which emotions come up when you contemplate the future?</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. Describe your plans for the future</b></p>

## Appendix 2 - Follow-up Research Study on Darca Graduates' Comparative Personal Viewpoint

Authors: Dr. Galia Ran and Eran Cinamon

The current research is a follow-up to the study on "The Foundations Accelerating Darca Graduates' Career Paths - a retrospective view of the network's graduates", which was conducted during the months of June-September 2021. The study sought to investigate the learning experience of Darca network graduates, in order to characterize the overall educational endeavor in the network's schools, with the aim of improving it. The aim of the study was to point out the factors that promote the development of graduates who function successfully in their personal, social and professional lives, as attested by the graduates themselves. A Darca network graduate, as depicted by the present study, is characterized by a stable and clear value base, which places achievement and excellence in the center, alongside social and cultural belonging. These values are accompanied by an impressive ability to manage a rich and broad lifestyle and to formulate a clear 'future orientation', which includes aspirations for management and leadership, alongside a significant contribution to society and the community.

The objective of the current study is to shed light on how the network's graduates evaluate their own performance **compared to their peers (of the same age)**, focusing on employment, academia, social-community activities, leisure and the combination of roles. Another aim of the study was to assess the extent to which the network's graduates attribute their performance to the educational endeavors in the Darca network's schools.

### Participants

The survey participants were 20 Darca graduates (11 men and 9 women), 20-29 years old young adults ( $M=24.15$ ;  $SD=2.62$ ). The vast majority ( $n=18$ ) are single, and the rest ( $n=2$ ) are married, of whom one is a mother. In terms of religious orientation, 70% ( $n=14$ ) among the participants are Jews, 25% ( $n=5$ ) Druze and 5% ( $n=1$ ) are "atheist Jews".

The vast majority of participants - 95% ( $n=19$ ) are pursuing academic studies (at the time of the questionnaire or just prior to it). Of those in academic studies, 75% ( $n=16$ ) are attending universities across Israel, with 50% ( $n=11$ ) of those studying scientific degrees (like engineering and computer science) and medicine. In terms of evaluation of academic achievements, 45% ( $n=9$ ) of those participants in academia estimated their grade average to be above 90, 45% ( $n=9$ ) between 80-90, and 10% ( $n=2$ ) between 70-80. Moreover, 85% ( $n=17$ ) of them demonstrated a strong drive to further continue their academic education.

Most of the graduates ( $n=18$ ) combine a steady job, held between several months and 3 years, with their studies, while presenting noticeable ambition for professional promotion. Accordingly, 65% ( $n=13$ ) attested that professional promotion was "very important" for them, while the rest said it was "important" to them.

In terms of financial self evaluation, 40% ( $n=8$ ) of participants estimated their economic situation for the foreseeable future to be "above average", 35% ( $n=7$ ) "about average", 15% ( $n=3$ ) "below average" and 2% ( $n=2$ ) above average.

## Appendix 2 - Follow-up Research Study on Darca Graduates' Comparative Personal Viewpoint, continued

### Tools and Method

The participants completed two self-reporting questionnaires, which were formulated specifically by the authors of this report. (See Appendix 3) As part of the formulation of the questionnaires, preliminary talks were held with the Darca people who initiated the survey, in order to clarify the purpose of the survey and some inherent ethical aspects. The preparation of the questionnaires entailed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The following is a description of the questionnaires:

The first questionnaire addressed the personal and comparative functional assessment by participants, and included 6 questions: 5 questions relating to personal functional assessment in the areas of employment, academia, social-community activities, leisure and the combination of roles. This functional assessment was made in relation to the peer group of the study participants. For example, "How do you view your professional achievements compared to your peers?". Another question invited the participants to evaluate the contribution of their educational experience in the Darca school they attended to the current functional state of affairs they presented. For example: "To what extent do you attribute your capabilities which you have described above to the Darca school you attended?". The participants rated their view for each question, on a 5-point scale, from 1 ("very low relative to other peers") to 5 ("very high relative to other peers"). Additionally, participants were given a chance to elaborate and explain their quantitative answer for each question by qualitative means.

The second questionnaire included personal demographic details like age, gender, residence, and more. This data assisted in characterization of the participants.

### Procedure

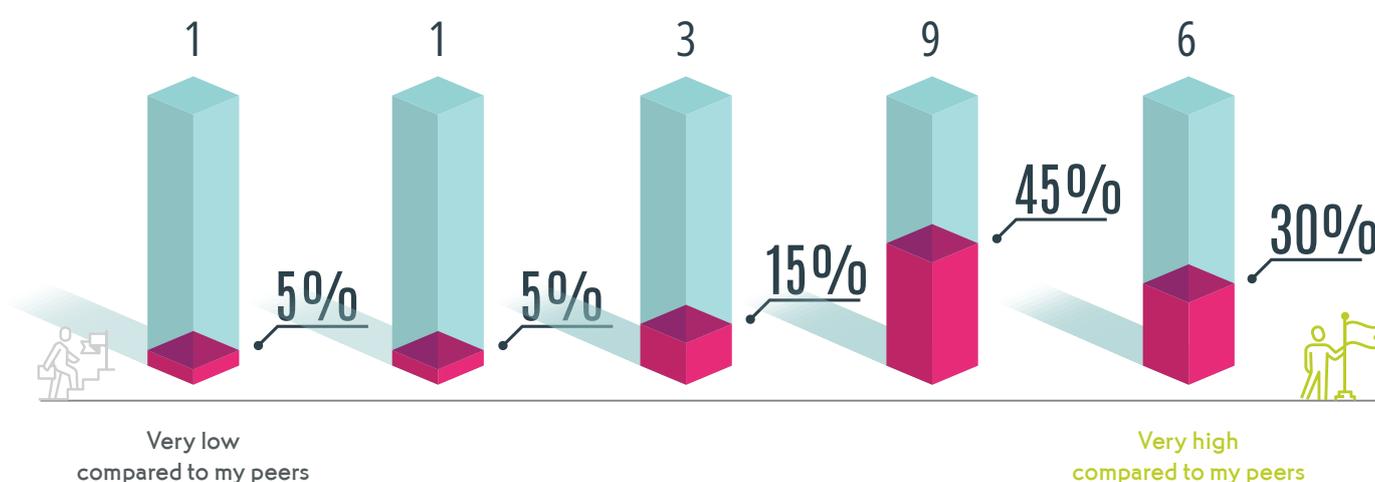
The research participants were recruited by the management of the Darca network, through a link distributed to graduates asking them to fill out the questionnaires, with the assistance of the alumni coordinators in the schools. The invitation emphasized the purpose of the survey, as well as relevant ethical aspects, including the fact that participation in the survey is voluntary and anonymous.

### Findings

The following findings are based on the 6 questions included in the first questionnaire. Quantitative data is displayed first, using a diagram illustrating the distribution of the responses on the scale (number of responses and percentage). Next, the participants' responses are shown, which elaborate and expand on the quantitative data.

#### The findings are as follows:

##### I. How do you view your professional achievements compared to your peers?



It seems that the vast majority of participants view themselves as **highly functioning compared to their peers, as far as employment goes**. Accordingly, 30% (n=6) view themselves as very highly functioning compared to peers, and 45% (n=9) view themselves as highly functioning compared to peers. 15% (n=3) view themselves in the same functioning level as their peers, and 10% (n=2) view themselves as lower than peers in terms of functioning professionally.

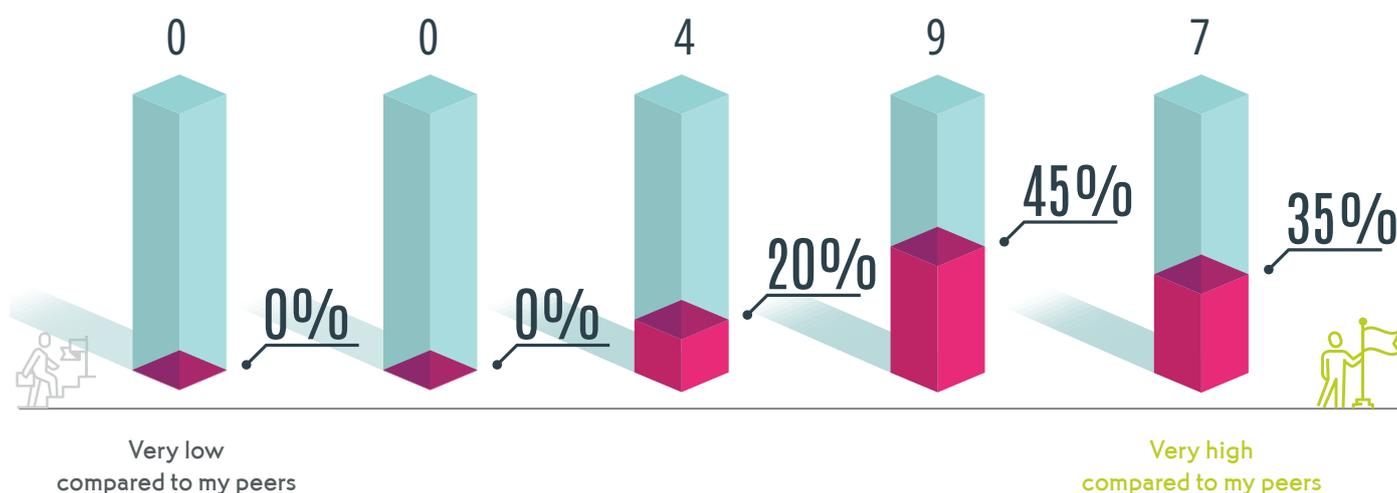
Participants addressed in their responses several aspects related to functioning in the occupational world. Among them the aspect of **meaningful work**. For example, one participant emphasized and said "I work with an important and meaningful subject". Another aspect participants held in high regard was having **drive and leadership** in the professional arena. One participant said "I feel that I excel and lead others thanks to the skills and tools I developed during my years at the Darca school". **Occupational ambitions** was also mentioned as an important component of functioning in the workplace, as one respondent said: "My motivation to succeed and climb the ladder is high". Additionally, respondents highlighted their sense of **commitment and belonging** to the workplace. This was described as one respondent as follows: "I see myself as a good employee who is committed to her work, I want my workplace to succeed and grow, whether network wide or just at my local branch".

## Appendix 2 - Follow-up Research Study on Darca Graduates' Comparative Personal Viewpoint, continued

One of the key developmental components described in relation to work demonstrates the **occupational self-efficacy** of the participants, which refers to the belief they have about their ability to successfully perform the occupational tasks in their lives. Here are some quotes that highlighted this component: "I feel that my abilities are significantly higher than my peers." "I feel my achievements are relatively high, since I was offered a promotion very early on, and it feels like they trust me at work". "I estimate that my salary is higher than that of my friends".

It should be emphasized that these occupational aspects were mostly attributed by the participants to the **Darca network** and the educational activity at the schools. Accordingly, the participants said in their remarks: "I think I was able to achieve things and get to places that not many of my peers have reached... at work I manage to prove myself and express myself in a way that a lot of my peers can't".

### II. How do you view your academic achievements compared to your peers?



It seems that the **vast majority of participants view themselves as highly functioning compared to their peers, as far as academic effort goes**. Accordingly, 35% (n=7) view themselves as very highly functioning compared to peers, and 45% (n=9) view themselves as highly functioning compared to peers. 20% (n=4) view themselves in the same functioning level as their peers, while none of the respondents view their academic functioning as lower than their peers.

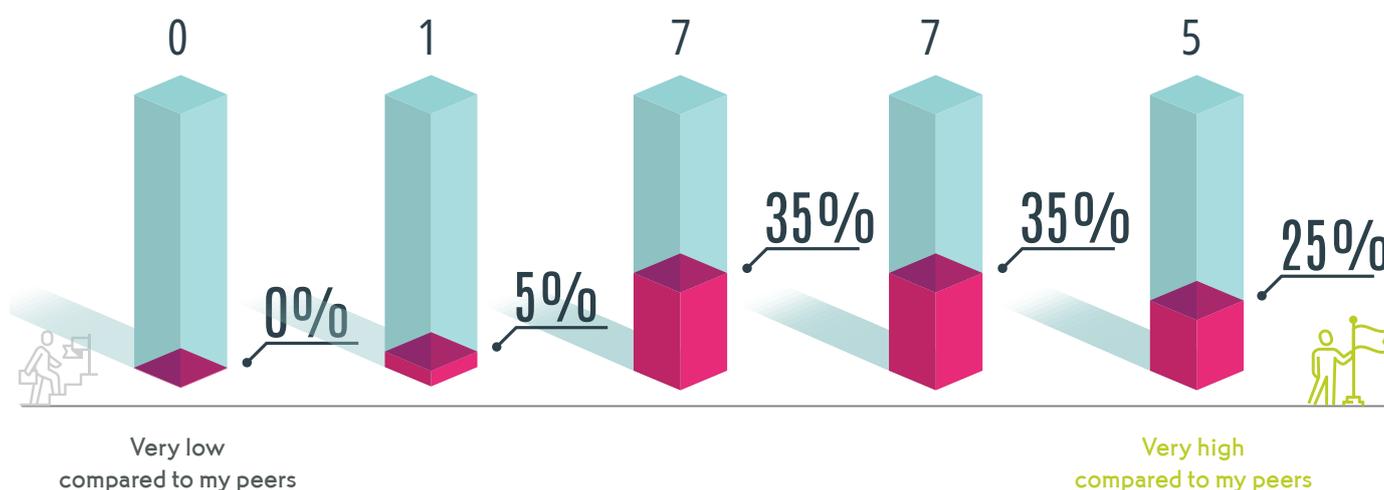
Participants' responses to the academic aspect of their lives also highlighted some interesting and unique points. One of which was the fact that participants **went into academia at a young age**. They say, for example: "at a relatively young age I study a subject that not many of my peers study"; "at 21 I am at the last year of my degree, in a field I always wanted to study"; "Right now, I am at the second year of my degree while most of my friends hadn't even started to study" .

## Appendix 2 - Follow-up Research Study on Darca Graduates' Comparative Personal Viewpoint, continued

Participants emphasized their **motivation and drive for academic excellence**. Examples of this can be found in quotes such as this: "I invest myself totally in academic success"; "I have a lot of motivation and a desire to succeed, even though I recognize my learning difficulties like lack of concentration and a difficulty in formulating the main ideas that I want to convey"; "My average grades are high and reach the threshold of excellence."

Much like in the occupational field, **respondents attribute their academic achievements to the Darca school they attended and their experience there**. The following are a few quotes demonstrating this: "I always finish all my tasks before everyone else, and always with high grades. Darca is a part of my success"; "School taught me that in order to succeed you must persevere and invest time and effort. I did so when I was a high school student, and I keep doing it today in academia"; "School helped me to develop my motivation to learn and succeed".

### III. How would you rate your community and social contribution compared to your peers?



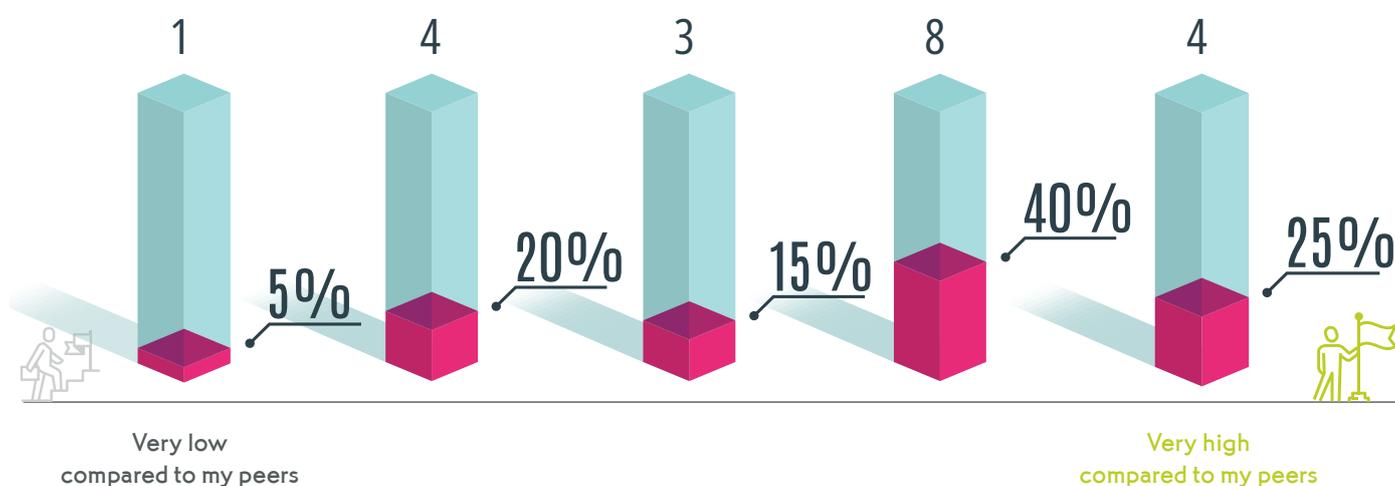
It seems that the **vast majority of participants view themselves as highly functioning compared to their peers, as far as community and social engagement**. Accordingly, 25% (n=5) view themselves as very highly functioning compared to peers, and 35% (n=7) view themselves as highly functioning compared to peers. 35% (n=7) rate themselves as equal to their peers, and only one respondent 5% (n=1) rates himself as functioning lower than his peers in terms of community and social contribution.

The participants emphasized the ongoing integration of contribution and social action into their lives, as a part of their daily life, alongside other roles. For example: "I volunteer and take part in social projects"; "I define myself as a social activist, who contributes to society at every opportunity"; "For the past year and a half I have been working for the Student Association at the academic institution where I study, and try to do my best for the students in the college, in various welfare and social areas"; "I have already volunteered three times during my degree, and it was not obvious before I started high school, since I am very shy."

The participants are aware that the way in which contribution and social action is intertwined with their life, is **unique compared to their peers**. In addition, **they seem to recognize the importance of volunteering and social action and show a desire to expand the volunteering aspect** in their lives. For example, "I see great satisfaction in volunteering and feel that I have contributed a lot (it is never enough) relative to my peers, and that thanks to this contribution I have been able to reach many places"; "I would like to contribute more."

## Appendix 2 - Follow-up Research Study on Darca Graduates' Comparative Personal Viewpoint, continued

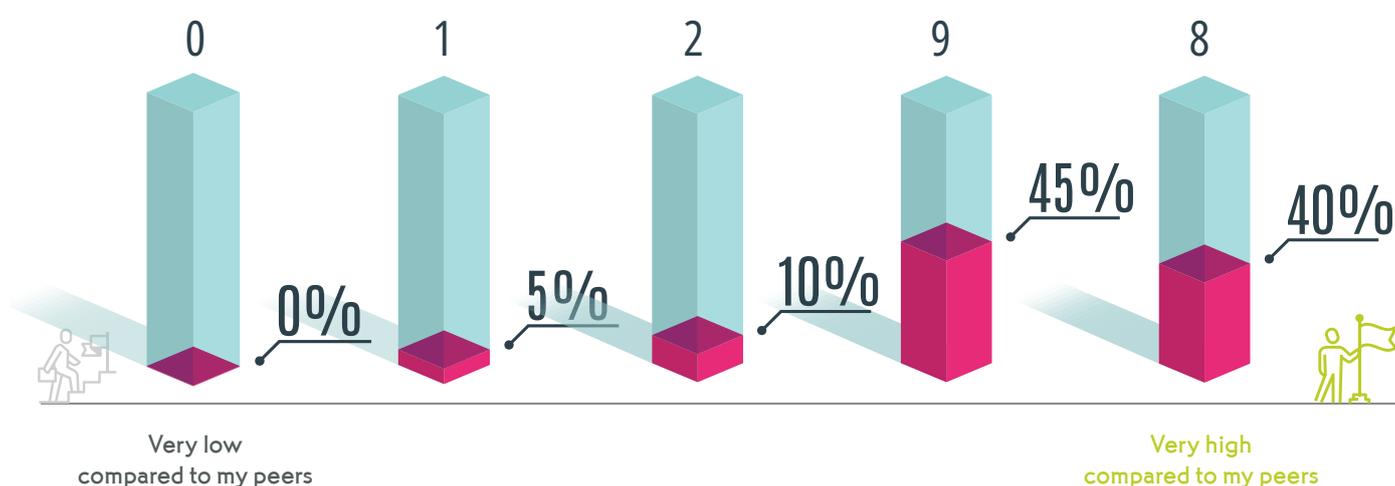
### IV. How do you rate your ability to manage substantial recreational activity and leisure compared to your peers?



It seems that as far as leisure and recreation the vast majority of participants view themselves as highly functioning compared to their peers. Accordingly, 25% (n=5) view themselves as very highly functioning compared to peers, and 40% (n=8) view themselves as highly functioning compared to peers. 15% (n=3) view themselves in the same functioning level as their peers. However, a number of respondents claimed they are functioning at a lower level than their peers in this arena. Accordingly, 20% (n=4) rate their function in the leisure and recreation area as lower than their peers, and 5% (n=1) even rates himself as functioning substantially lower than his peers in that area.

A few quotes that demonstrate the part that leisure plays in the lives of respondents: "I succeed in combining leisure, work and study"; "Within my work routine, I make sure to allow 1-3 hours every day for leisure activities. I see great importance in that"; "I try to manage my time effectively so I can study, work and volunteer, and spend time with my friends".

### V. How would you rate your ability to combine successfully between all areas of life compared to your peers?



## Appendix 2 - Follow-up Research Study on Darca Graduates' Comparative Personal Viewpoint, continued

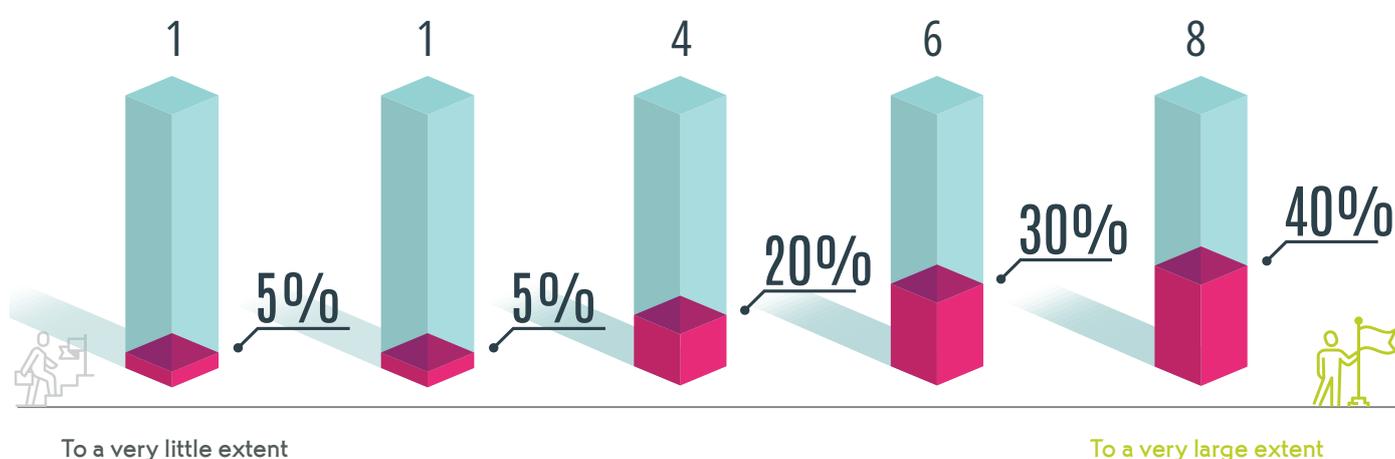
A similar trend can be seen in relation to the ability to combine areas of life. In this area too, it seems that the vast majority of participants view themselves as highly functioning compared to their peers. Accordingly, 40% (n=8) view themselves as very highly functioning compared to peers, and 45% (n=9) view themselves as highly functioning compared to peers. 10% (n=2) rate themselves as equal to their peers, and 5% (n=1) rates himself as functioning lower than his peers in terms of the ability to combine life roles.

The respondents report **confidence and success in effectively managing several life roles**. The following quotes demonstrate these aspects: "I succeed in managing my time well"; "I think my time management is good in the sense that I can combine all roles and activities and do it all simultaneously"; "I take on social engagement, study and work, and manage to organize my time"; "I maintain work-life balance".

Much like the previous areas, this ability to combine roles is viewed by respondents as **a capability which is unique to them compared to their peers**. One of them says: "Most of my friends focus on one area of life (work mostly), while I combine work and study".

The respondents attribute this skill too to **their experiences at Darca schools**. The participants describe how this skill was nurtured during their school years, saying: "In school I received many tools thanks to which I learned to manage time"; "The teachers at the school taught and guided us about finding the balance between school and leisure, so I was able to balance the worlds"; "Already when I was a high school student, organization and time management skills were fostered at school, as well as prioritizing skills".

### VI. To what extent do you attribute the capabilities which you have described above to the Darca school you attended?



It seems that most respondents attribute the above to the educational experience at Darca schools. Accordingly, 40% (n=8) remarked that the Darca school contributed to a very large extent, and 30% (n=6) to a large extent. 20% (n=4) estimated the school's contribution to be average (not very large and not very little), and 10% (n=2) estimated it to be little or very little.

Finally, the respondents are grateful for the educational experience they had at Darca schools, and view it as a crucial preview for development and success later in life. Here are a few examples:

- "I thank Darca so much, I went through a significant transformation which shaped me and allowed me to acquire many tools that assist me until today, both personally and professionally".
- "The Darca Science and Leadership school in Yarka changed me life (for the better). My self-confidence increased, I began to express my opinions more, and I feel that my life is all set thanks Darca"; "I feel that school was like a greenhouse for me, and contributed a lot to me, and led me to places I did not know in myself."
- "I was happy to take part in this important survey, I can safely say that many of the achievements I have gained in life, whether in my studies or at work, are largely thanks to the tools and values I received in school, skills like standing in front of an audience, learning how to study and more..."
- "School in my eyes is the first door and the important foundation for success which gives you momentum. I believe I would be somewhere else today if I had not gotten what I did in school."
- "Thank you. You play a very important part in promoting society, the future looks brighter thanks to you".
- "Thanks to school and the feeling that somebody believes in me and does not give up on me, I have made it to where I am today. In retrospect, that period shaped me, both personally and as I can see today - also professionally. Thank you and well done!"
- "I loved school very much and felt like I got all my needs answered very well. "Thank you"

Specifically, **participants emphasize the work of the teachers at the schools**, and their faith in the students. For example, they say: "it is important for me to note that without the teachers' trust in me and my success, I would not have gotten where I am", adding "thanks to the teachers who taught and guided and thanks to the motivation they instilled"; "my social activism and the desire to contribute is inspired by some teachers that I have greatly appreciated and still appreciate."

In conclusion, after reviewing the report's findings, we can say that they reinforce the findings of the study on which we relied, and further validate the contribution of the educational practices in the Darca schools to the general development of its graduates. Specifically, the survey findings shed a light **on the high view held by Darca graduates of their functional abilities relative to their peers**, in terms of employment, academic achievement, social-community aspect, leisure and recreation, and the ability to combine all roles. **This functional advantage is attributed by the graduates to the educational endeavors in the network's schools**, and especially to the work of educators and teachers working there, who served as a source of security and enabled them to succeed.

## Appendix 3 - Questionnaires

Dear graduate,

As part of the network's constant training and improvement process, we ask you to participate in the Darca Network Alumni Survey.

The purpose of the survey is to examine the personal perception held by the network graduates in relation to their lifestyle in comparison to others of their age, and the role that Darca schools played in shaping this lifestyle.

To that end, we ask you to answer the questions below (duration of the survey is 5 minutes).

The survey is anonymous and the data collected will be used only for streamlining our organization.

Thanks in advance,

### Darca network management

I have read the objectives of the survey. It has been made clear to me that participation in this survey is voluntary and anonymous, and that the collected data will be used only for streamlining the Darca organization. Furthermore, I understand that I can pause my participation in this survey at any point.

#### Comparative personal evaluation questionnaire:

The following questions deal with your lifestyle in several areas of life, work, study, community, recreation and leisure, as well as the role Darca network played in shaping this lifestyle.

Please rate the way you view yourself compared to your peers, on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

1. How do you view your professional achievements compared to your peers? Elaborate

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2. How do you view your professional achievements compared to your peers? Elaborate

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3. How would you rate your community and social contribution compared to your peers? Elaborate

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4. How do you rate your ability to manage substantial recreational activity and leisure, compared to your peers? Elaborate

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5. How would you rate your ability to combine successfully between all areas of life compared to your peers? Elaborate

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6. To what extent do you attribute the capabilities which you have described above to the Darca school you attended? Elaborate

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## Appendix 3 - Questionnaires

### Personal details questionnaire:

Please fill out the following details:

- Year of birth \_\_\_\_\_
- Gender \_\_\_\_\_
- Family status \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you have children? \_\_\_\_\_
- If so, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

### Education -

- Do you attend higher education, or have you attended it in the past? \_\_\_\_\_
- Name of current or past institution \_\_\_\_\_
- Study subject and specialization \_\_\_\_\_
- Your grade average \_\_\_\_\_
- How important is it for you to continue your studies? \_\_\_\_\_

### Work -

- Do you currently work? \_\_\_\_\_
- How long have you had your current job? \_\_\_\_\_
- How important is it for you to be promoted professionally? \_\_\_\_\_
- Please estimate your current financial state, or your state for the foreseeable future. \_\_\_\_\_

Finally, any comments....?

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Thank you for your cooperation!

**Darca network management**

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