

Dewey's Concept of "Experience" and Its Importance to the "Personal/ Professional" Dilemma of Teacher Education Tutoring Process

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Abstract

In the present paper, I discuss the internal conflict that accompanies the work of fellow pedagogical supervisors in teacher training institutes. Such internal conflict is manifested in the difficulty that pedagogical supervisors face in successfully integrating the subjective (the personal) and objective (the professional) dimensions of the work of pedagogical supervision. This difficulty, I argue, challenges the possibility of formulating ideological guidelines for the tutor - student relationship, and may ultimately negatively impact the quality of the teacher education process. Below I describe the complexity of the dilemma and its pedagogical implications. Subsequently, I propose a criterion for its resolution via Dewey's concept of 'experience' which I have applied in the context of my work as a pedagogical supervisor in the Primary Education Program at Contradictory Components of Teacher Training.

The mission of training future teachers, as it finds expression in the context of pedagogical supervision, places the pedagogical supervisor in an ideologically complicated position. On the one hand, the supervisor must satisfy the individualistic, inner needs of the student while on the other hand he must prepare the student to comply with external, professional and objective teaching criteria. This position, characterized by a persistent tension between the subjective and objective components of supervision, often turns out to be problematic since it incorporates within it elements whose ideological premises are not always compatible.

The subjective elements of the teacher training process are manifested in the implementation of a progressive approach that supports the personal development of education students. Such an approach places the student's special needs at the center of the educational process. According to this logic, the goals of education are derived from the developmental needs of the individual. Accordingly, this approach tries to free itself of external measures and aims, and defines the individual as the criterion by which the process is evaluated. Proper development of the individual, according to this approach, can occur only in an atmosphere devoid of pressures, threats, and coercion. The function of Education, accordingly, is to clear from the path of the young developing person anything that is liable to sabotage his development.¹ This approach is implemented in the assimilation of a personal and dialogical support system for students throughout their training. In Practice this approach is implemented in the assimilation of a personal support system for the students throughout their training And in the formulation of a pedagogical curriculum that is based on the individuation approach (emphasizing programs for children with learning difficulties; clarification of the social and emotional background; emphasis on the development of intrinsic measures such as curiosity, criticality, creativity, etc).

The objective components of the teacher training process, on the one hand, are manifested in external, professional, clear-cut, and uncompromising measures and requirements, whose fulfillment is perceived as essential to the teacher training process. Such an extrinsic approach, which sets general and external criteria for evaluating the subjective development of students, views the professional process as the 'hard' foundation to which the individual, as an ostensive 'soft' foundation, must be fit. According to such a view, the system, whose representative in this context is the pedagogical supervisor, trains the student for the role of teaching, which he fulfills upon the completion of his studies and professional training, and it is this system that regulates his actual performance by establishing norms of behavior and conduct. In such a system, external and objective criteria are anterior to internal and subjective ones, and the individual student must adapt himself (or at least act in a positive relation) to the measures and objectives established by the system that trains him. This approach is applied via a system of standards of behavioral and academic requirements,

including those pertaining to grading and papers, academic conduct and responsibility, investment in coursework, pedagogical orientation, academic earnestness, etc.

Below, I argue that this complex mixture places the pedagogical tutor in a complicated and even sometimes paradoxical position. On the one hand, pedagogical training is committed to the personal growth of education students; as such, it incorporates individualistic discourse of an emotional and personal nature, which is meant to unconditionally support such growth. On the other hand, it deals with, and is ultimately responsible for, the training and screening of professional, competent educators, and hence obligated to the fulfillment of external standards and objective conditions. This dualistic position can generate significant dilemmas for the pedagogical supervisor. In some cases he may find himself torn between his status as a professional pedagogical authority (with all the responsibility that entails) and his role as supervisor, facilitator, and mediator, who follows the student throughout his personal and professional development.²

In the absence of a clear correlation between subjective and objective components of teacher education, the proper measures for evaluating students, the goal and authority of the pedagogical supervisor and the means of achieving proper training all remain vague. For example: to what degree does the personal (emotional, intellectual) development of the student relevant when it is unclear whether this development culminates in the formation of a mature and qualified educator? Or to what degree should we adjust academic demands to the individual abilities of each student, reduce reading and writing requirements, lower the level of discourse to the student's initial, subjective level (hoping that in this way he will better himself gradually with time) Or should we instead set objective standards for proper academic conduct that will serve as a yardstick and threshold in the education student's passage into professional life? Also, what about the degree of transparency that should be required of future teachers in the framework of their training? And to what extent must we take pains to avoid a negative psychological impact on the teacher in training, when, in our estimation, the quality of his teaching is below any reasonable level, and when he himself lacks an awareness of the gravity of his situation.

Such Ideological incoherence and the common tendency of tutors toward emphasizing the subjective element of teacher education can have problematic effects. Firstly, it damages the professional authority of the tutor and his ability to provide objective criteria for evaluating the student. Secondly, it blurs the fundamental difference between the cultivating of future educators and the nurturing of schoolchildren.³ And finally, and most important - such an incoherence threaten to harm the reflective dimension of the pedagogical Praxis since it minimizes the reflective dimension of reality and its function as an objective criterion for evaluating the performance and caliber of the student. The tendency to overlook the formative importance of the objective dimension of the training process ultimately limits the student's own developmental opportunities and his ability to grow, since he does not gain a valid reflection on his work, and hence is unable to develop a self consciousness and a positive normative criterion of a higher order (I will address the theoretical ground and its pedagogical implication in further detail later on).

In my view, reexamination of the contradictory elements can positively contribute to the quality of teacher's education tutoring process. Such a reexamination must begin by searching for a positive correlation, which can (dialectically) integrate the objective and subjective dimensions of teacher training. Such coherence will help to maintain the importance of an empathic and personal attitude towards the student, without compromising one's authority to professionally and objectively evaluate him. Below I propose such a possible criterion for establishing a synthesis between the subjective and objective dimensions of teacher training – a synthesis embodied in certain aspects of the concept of 'experience' coined by the American philosopher John Dewey.

1. 'Experience' as a Means of Establishing Reflective Consciousness

The educational theories of the American philosopher John Dewey are known for their attempt to bridge the dichotomy that characterizes Western thought. In his extensive theoretical work, Dewey deals with the moral and operative implications of dichotomies such as individual/society, spirit/matter, nature/culture, Subjective/Objective etc. For Dewey, the 'rupture' between these dichotomies is not a necessity condition, issuing from the ontological nature of the world, but is rather an 'epistemological' distortion in reality perception. The origin of the gap lies, in his view, in our misperception of the different elements as diametrically opposed, and in the case of the Subjective/Objective dichotomy, in our implicit attempt to establish subjectivity purely on the basis of the isolated individual.⁴

In contrast to this non-dialectical tendency, Dewey sought to establish a consciousness based on a synthesis between the subjective and objective dimensions of reality. This synthesis, based on the epistemological principles of 'pragmatism,' and embodied in his concept of 'experience,' holds that the subjective and the objective are inextricably intertwined and interdependent. By this logic, values in consciousness originate in people's concrete and everyday experience, rather than in abstractions regarding the nature of (moral, philosophical or pedagogical) reality. This pragmatist concept assumes that life is a process of adaptation via experience in the world in which the person deals with a series of new

and dynamic situations and conditions. Pragmatism's basic hypothesis in this context is that the meaning of a given concept is found in the practical consequences ensuing from its acceptance, and that the truthfulness of a proposition is measured by its working in praxis.⁵ Dewey's pragmatism examines reality from a practical perspective and subjects it to empirical scrutiny. 'Experience' in this context means that a living being (as a subject) acts on his environment (as an object), and afterwards suffers the consequences.⁶ When he observes the causal link between his actions and their results, he becomes 'deliberate' or 'aware' – Actual meaning, in that sense, is linked to behavior.

It is important to note that not all activity is "experience", but may instead be simply conscious activity in which the person actively and intentionally adapts himself to his environment.⁷ "Experience", writes Park (p. 209) "must involve doing, acting, changing. The organism does not merely exist in a state of inactivity, waiting for something to happen to it". An active state of consciousness is set in motion only when the harmony between the person and his environment is disturbed – that is, when there forms in the person a need that violates the prior balance and confronts the person with a new 'problematic situation'. Thus experience turns out to be a conscious and active coping process. In certain places, Dewey uses the term "disturbed situation" namely, a feeling of disruption, of suffering entailed in the loss of harmonious positivity. Further more Dewey writes: "thinking takes its departure from specific conflicts in experience that occasion perplexity and trouble. Men do not, in their natural estate, think when they have no troubles to cope with, no difficulties to overcome. A life of ease, of success without effort, will be thoughtless life, And so also a life of ready omnipotence."⁸

This last argument, claims Ben Azar (2002: 42), stands as a critical insight since it implies that suffering and knowledge are of a single origin. Doing originates in a sense of discomfort, in the desire to abolish such a feeling and restore the previous, undisturbed state of tranquility and harmony. Adapting doing to the elimination of a state of discomfort is an "intelligent" act, which requires discretion, an appropriate choice of means, and an awareness of potential consequences. These three elements – suffering, doing, and intelligence – are what turn mere experience into purposeful and conscious experience.⁹ Coping with a problematic situation, in this sense, promotes development, while a successful solution permits additional activity and experience, moves the person forward, and expands and develops his consciousness.

Beyond being a catalyst for growth and development, 'experience' is a means of aiding the formation of a context-situated reflective consciousness; it exposes the potential inherent in the relation between the subjective and objective, and embodies the immanent reciprocal processes between the person and the world. Experience, accordingly, places the person in context – it helps consciousness to internalize the fact that the situation in which it is located is not merely subjective, does not lie only within us, and is not an isolated and detached event. The way the situation develops, for that matter, is dependant upon my activity, on what I do. This recognition of the connection between the subjective and objective, and of the implications that they have for each other, is the foundation of reflective consciousness – consciousness that links action to consequences. It is important to note that this kind of pragmatist cognizance entails awareness not only of things in retrospect, but also in prospect. In this sense, experience serves to orient thought and action towards the fulfillment of a purpose, toward the realization of a goal.¹⁰

2. On the Implications of the Concept of Experience for the Pedagogical Supervisor's Work

In my view, the Deweyan concept of experience can contribute to the development of qualitative criteria for conducting and evaluating pedagogical supervision. This concept, as described above, can help pedagogical supervisors to bridge the gap between subjective and objective space, and constructively channel it towards the establishment of a reflective pedagogical consciousness.

The Concept of Experience has special relevance in the contexts of teacher colleges' Practical orientation.¹¹ In contrast to the academic-theoretical orientation customary at the universities, pedagogical supervisors at the educational colleges welcome the possibility of dealing with real problems, such as those derived from concrete, everyday educational praxis (classroom management issues, didactic and curriculum dilemmas, teacher\children\parents relations and so on). Such practical encounters maintain the relevance of context and the vitality of educational discourse. When the problem is removed from its actual context it becomes a 'false problem'. The theoretical treatment of the child or of the curriculum alone, for example, is an abstract treatment - the asymmetrical emphasis decontextualizes the problem, and hence abstracts it.¹² In this way, the importance of teacher training as a real experiential space in which theory is not divorced from practice, but rather entails and feeds it, becomes clear. Such space is, in my view, fertile ground for the development of a proper, reflexive educative consciousness.

The application of the concept of "experience" to the training process entails a revision of the traditional role of the pedagogical supervisor. He is in charged now not only with the subjective, cognitive empowerment of the student under his supervision, but also with the clarification and improvement of the "objective space" – meaning the academic and educational experiences in which he is involved. In this sense, the attention of the training is transferred from the subject himself (the student) to the enhancement of pedagogical experience as a whole. Accordingly, pedagogical supervisors

should avoid their intuitive tendency to attempt to control and to guide every aspect of the training, since this can disconnect the student from praxis and negatively impacts the quality of his educational experience.¹³ Over the years, we have observed that the supervisors often find themselves in the role of therapist, advocate, friend, and even confidant of the student. In other cases, the supervisor became a nearly exclusive mediator between the student and the pedagogical world (the school administration, the mentor teacher, the children in the classroom, the instructors at the college, and the authorities). When this happens the pedagogical supervisor active presence weakens the complexity and experiential quality of praxis; by this logic, when we help the student to resolve every problem that arises, spontaneously express empathy with his situation, and fail to confront him with the repercussions of his actions in praxis, we act, paradoxically, to degrade the quality of his experience, and contribute to the formation of a passive and unaware consciousness.

Based on the pragmatist logic of experience the pedagogical supervisor must act, in various ways, to create an educational space that is seen as a challenge that drives the student into a state of discomfort in which he is forced to act and think in an active way. The role of the supervisor during this phase is to help the student to define the problem, to determine it, in order to offer a point of compass towards a potential solution – but under no circumstances is the supervisor to resolve the situation for the student. The aim of the pedagogical supervisor, then, is to try to transform “mere experience” undergone by the student on a daily basis in school into “conscious experience” – a deliberate and informed experience, which is aimed at the drawing of conclusions and the construction of a reflective, independent, and responsible pedagogical outlook.

The application of experience as a criterion for practice and evaluation also transforms the educational climate in the training process. As noted, the teacher training process is largely based on the ideological logic of the individualist approach. According to this perspective, the training process focuses on the empowerment of the education student's subjective (internal, mental, intrinsic) space. This individualist view attempts to create for the student a comfortable educational space, which is meant to be as pleasant and harmonious as possible. Such a climate is achieved through the provision of personal and professional support, refinement of relations, resolution of conflicts, assessment of difficulties, etc. This positive approach is meant to enhance the natural and undisturbed growth of the student, yet, when subjected to the test of “experience”, it revealed to be largely problematic, since it minimizes the dialectic link between the (internal) subject and the external object (pedagogical space). By contrast, “Experience” stresses the interrelationship between the person and his environment, between the subjective and the objective. Dewey emphasizes that “without external embodiment, an experience remains incomplete; physiologically and functionally”.¹⁴ In this manner, subjective, mental experience does not remain enclosed within the individual (for if it does it is indicative of a pathological problem).

By this logic, if we wish to establish a reflexive consciousness that realistically links action and consequence, present and future, subjective and objective perspective, then we must mirror for the student his situation in the most adamant and clearest of terms, even when this entails a certain personal discomfort. If the student's academic level, as reflected in his academic writing, is not up to par, for example, we must point this out, stress what is deficient, and indicate what must be done to improve it. If a lesson is taught by the student in an unsatisfactory manner, we must make this clear in the frankest of terms, and so forth. Demonstrating reality as it is will help students to thoroughly identify their place and caliber, and to make appropriate decisions toward a positive and realistic progress. Ultimately, such realistic cognizance has greater potential to support student's actual growth, even, and perhaps especially, if this involves a degree of frustration and hardship.

In conclusion of this section, I contend the notion of ‘experience’ offers a positive criterion for the integration of subjective and objective spaces in the field of teacher education. Such a space allows for the non-contradictory establishment of a supervisory relationship that is empathic, encouraging, and supportive, on the one hand, and challenging and demanding, on the other hand. I believe that such an approach to training aids in the formation of a more steadfast and meaningful professional identity, since the sense of self-worth derived from accomplishment is more profound when the person acts in relation to an objective model, and when he feels that he has worked hard, improved, and overcome difficulties and weaknesses that characterized his performance in the past. Accordingly, one must remember that for many education students, their studies serve as a socio-economic springboard; for them, the demand to meet professional, external, and objective standards can in itself elevate in their eyes both their own self-image and the image of the teaching profession.

3. Conclusion

The case narrative presented above embodies the complexity of the process of pedagogical evaluation and supervision in the framework of teacher training. The pedagogical supervisor is positioned at an incomparably significant juncture in the training of education students. He accompanies the teacher in training throughout his initial encounter with the children and the teaching staff in the schools, and accompanies him through the diversity of pedagogical experiences in the classroom.

Doing that, he also presents the students with criteria for appropriate conduct and guides them through the emotional experience of teaching. He is responsible for the personal development of the teacher in training, and at the same time evaluates his personal and intellectual skills from a professional standpoint. He serves as an open ear and a mediatory and supportive agent, while simultaneously his evaluation serves as a gateway to a higher Self-esteem and better profession for his students. Thus, alongside his work as a counselor, guide, supporter, facilitator, and mentor, his authoritative role is stressed at all times - as trainer, supervisor, and screener. The pedagogical supervisor's responsibility is divided between his commitment to the personal growth of the student and his commitment to teaching standards. This situation is seen in many cases as contradictory in nature, and often leads to a feeling of confusion, frustration, guilt, and lack of professionalism among pedagogical supervisors in the course of their work.

My main argument in the present article is that subjective and objective dimensions can be bridged via the concept of "experience" (as explained above); and moreover that these dimensions are intertwined and feed one another. Accordingly, I claimed that, in many cases, the best and most effective way of making significant progress in subjective space is through an emphasis and clarification of objective spaces. When they are clear, explicit, and logical, objective borderlines become fertile ground for the dialectical development of subjective space. They help the subject to develop a reflective consciousness regarding his situation, encourage progress and change of a higher order, facilitate the development of a sense of responsibility and self-efficacy, enrich the subject's range of experience and self-reflection, and finally, aid in the establishment of a normative system in light of which the teacher in training can independently assess his own conduct.

It is important to restate that an emphasis on subjective and objective dimensions is not sufficient in itself, and that the pedagogical supervision process must be based simultaneously on empathic and supportive guidance, which will empower the student and help him to find his place and personal voice in the training process. The dialectical integration of the Contradictory elements of the Teacher Training Process and the assimilation of their common logic into the training program can thus ensure a pedagogical process that is supportive without compromising the authority of the pedagogical supervisor to require that students meet objectively determined standards. I think that this special perspective, based on the dialectical nature of the concept of experience, can serve in the future formulation of a more concrete and coherent approach to pedagogical supervision.

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Notes

Note 1. See : Lam (2002), p. 105.

Note 2. In many instances, the pedagogical supervisor is the faculty member who maintains the closest contact with students at the college – a kind of “classroom educator”.

Note 3. In the current state of mind, for example, students frequently use a therapeutic jargon, which they pick up in various courses, to put into words their failure to meet a given standard determined for them in the framework of their studies. Students often justify their spelling mistakes and inability to put together a complex sentence to their being ‘dyslexic,’ their restlessness and frequent exits from the classroom to their being ‘hyperactive,’ and their deficient and superficial articulations in papers and dialogues to their being ‘culture victims.’

Note 4. Dewey (1962), p. 69.

Note 5. Park (1957), p. 269.

Note 6. Dewey (1920), p. 78.

Note 7. "When we experience something," writes Dewey, "we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness or value of the experience." Dewey (1916), p. 153.

Note 8. Dewey (1957), p. 139.

Note 9. Dewey (1958), p. 22; and also: Dewey (1957), p. 83.

Note 10. See: Dewey (1934), p. 335.

Note 11. In the framework of teacher training, the pedagogical supervisor is responsible for both the work of practical guidance, which includes preparation of instructional materials and feedback on the quality of instruction, and didactics classes, which deal with the theoretical conceptualization of pedagogical issues and situations that arise from the practical part.

Note 12. See: Ben-Azar (2002), p. 42.

Note 13. Dewey (1916: 164), stress that the measure of the value of an experience lays not in the actual act itself, but within the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up.

Note 14. Dewey (1934), p. 51.

Appendix: Case Narrative

[1] A low high school GPA prevented Gila, a young student of low socio-economic status, from being admitted as a regular student at the college. However, through a tremendous effort on her and her parents' part, including a series of letters, entreaties, promises, and meetings, the program's admissions committee were persuaded that her intentions were sincere, and that she should be given the chance to begin the process towards realizing her dream of "being a teacher." So, statements were made, contracts were signed, and explicit conditions were set. [2] And yet, already by the end of her first year of studies, it was strikingly clear that she was not meeting her obligations. Gila's academic achievements were low. She failed to improve her GPA as required, or to meet academic expectations in the various courses that she took. As is customary in such cases, Gila was invited to a pedagogical session in which her academic status was made clear – again things were said, letters were written, and promises were made.

[3] With the commencement of her second year of studies in didactics, Gila reiterated her strong desire to learn and succeed. Perhaps this was an echo of the warnings she received at the end of her first year of studies, or perhaps an expression of her increasingly apparent tendency to fail to internalize in practice the effort required to keep her obligations and to translate her sincere intentions into praxis. [4] And indeed, early in the first semester, Gila made an effort to be present and involved in her classes, and repeatedly asserted her earnest intentions. However, her performance, already during these early stages, was marked by significant deficiencies. She was incapable of following lines of argument, her participation in lessons was forced, and it was clear that she was failing to grasp pedagogical discourse in the classroom. Her first papers bore witness to tremendous difficulties – her writing was poor and fraught with typographical errors and incoherent phrasing. Beyond this, her behavior was peculiar – she did not bother to proofread the papers she submitted, and felt no shame in writing, in the framework of her correspondence with the pedagogical supervisor, emails full of typographical and phraseological errors. It appeared that she was wholly unconscious of her conduct and the impression it was making on others regarding her training.

[5] After a didactical and pedagogical strategy was formulated (by the pedagogical supervisor and the head of the program), Gila was invited to a meeting in which a discussion was held regarding papers she had submitted. The supervisor and Gila went over the papers together, while explanations were given and corrections were made. The supervisor's request was simple and direct: Gila needed to make more of an effort to think deeply, to read background material, to revise and proofread texts, to base her writing on didactical material that had been taught in the classroom, to not rush to submit her work, etc. Sessions of this kind were held almost on a bi-weekly basis, and each conversation ended in a promise on Gila's part to make a serious effort. Sometimes indeed an improvement occurred – but this was inconsistent and non-indicative of a qualitative change in her attitude. Moreover, the more the year went on, and the more her academic workload started to mount, the more Gila's failure to persevere in situations of frustration, effort, and

delay became acute. The lack of pedagogical/intellectual curiosity and work\study ethic on her part was also manifested in frequent exits from the classroom, and in a propensity for tardiness and absenteeism.

[6] In the first lessons that she taught (second grade), Gila proved to be a charismatic and lively teacher – she read stories to the children, asked good questions, and held an interesting dialogue with them. It was clear that she enjoyed teaching and derived satisfaction from it. The children, for their part, responded happily and rewarded her, as appreciative students will do, through explicit expressions of affection. Obviously, Gila was rewarded for such with encouragement and reinforcement – it seemed to the pedagogical supervisor, at that time, that if Gila were infected with the teaching “germ,” this would have implications for her academic earnestness. [7] These hopes, however, were dashed in light of her actual conduct after the fact – the next lesson plans she submitted were of a very low level: again full of typographical errors, again inappropriate to the class’ level, again illogical and deficient in content, sometimes embarrassingly so. The mentor teacher and the supervisor corrected her and explained again and again what she need to do to improve – and always the same reply – “Yes, I understand. It’s possible. I’ll try harder. I’ll change. I’ll invest more time and effort.” And so on. [8] At a certain stage, the supervisor called Gila in for a long discussion – he asked her what her thoughts were regarding her status and future, and made clear to her in detail where things stood (including the opinion of the mentor teacher, Gila’s grade report from the first semester, and feedback regarding the lessons she prepared and taught over the course of the year). During the conversation, it was emphasized how wide the gap was between the level of seriousness, responsibility, and maturity reflected in her present conduct and that required of a teacher in practice.

[9] Her reply was, as before, that up until now she had not understood her situation, and that from now on everything would change. She would work less hours at her evening job, and invest more time in her studies. In addition, she wrote a letter of obligation, and the supervisor drew up a letter signed by all those involved in her academic training. Still, it was puzzling – how could She have not internalized her status after so many conversations and letters? How could she be surprised time and time again by her situation? And again the same foretold story. After two weeks of change, including more thorough lesson plans (albeit at a low level), followed by a backslide: index cards full of typographical errors, puzzling emails – and most embarrassing of all, a children’s story that she taught for Purim with countless errors in phrasing and comprehension, and worksheets she distributed that were full of shameful typographical errors.

[10] At this stage, it was clear that Gila simply was not ready to be a teacher. Again a session was set up with the pedagogical supervisor in which Gila was confronted with the state of affairs, and in which it was now made clear to her that, continuing like that, she would not be permitted to finish her studies towards a teaching certificate. Gila responded with offense and astonishment (“What have you dropped on me?” she wrote in a spontaneous email, as if there had been no prior conversations or letters). A meeting was scheduled with the supervisor, and Gila told him of the various problems she was experiencing in her personal and family life, and the difficulties that were affecting her studies. [11] Of course, the supervisor again expressed empathy for her situation. The two engaged in a long conversation while walking through the streets near the school, and Gila spoke of her dream of being a teacher and of the hardships she faced. The supervisor explained the rationale underlying his pedagogical and professional philosophy as a trainer of teachers and as a teacher himself, and discussed the responsibility, desire, professionalism, joy, and love involved in the teaching profession. Gila spoke of her desire to become a teacher --- and of her love for the children that she was teaching in her training classroom.

[12] Alongside all of this, it was made clear to her, in plain language, that effective immediately her studies toward a teaching certificate would be terminated at this point. It was explained to her that, with all good intentions, she had to understand that ultimately the pedagogical supervisor and the head of the program are accountable first and foremost to the teachers and students in the schools. All the empathy in the world, then, could not cover the inadequacy of her efforts and achievements in practice. Accordingly, there was no excuse for the lack of effort on her part, or for the irresponsibility and unprofessional behavior that characterized her work over the past year. It was also noted to her that seriousness is not embodied in promises, letters or declarations, but rather, simply and concretely, in doing and actual proven results. [13] We discussed further the position of the college, the reasoning behind it, and its implications. Gila admitted that she did not devote enough time and effort to her studies, and that she did not adequately grasp the magnitude of the task and the price that she would have to pay for it. The conversation ended with mixed feelings – it seemed to the supervisor and the program head that, despite the harsh things that were said, Gila vocalized and heard things that were, ultimately, of authentic relevance to her training.

[14] It was clear now that the insights and conclusions that emerged in the discussion had to find expression in praxis, that the only chance for Gila to truly improve rested in her ability to experience, once and for all, the consequences of

her inadequate performance in reality. Only suspension from the teaching program, could close the gap between her desire in theory and her conduct in practice; only by denying her a teaching certificate for the time being, in all of its implications, could Gila be given a real chance of resuming her teaching studies in the future as a worthy student. And indeed, at the end of the year, Gila was invited for a talk with the pedagogical supervisor and the head of the program. [15] In this meeting, she was informed that, due to her poor achievements and performance throughout the academic year, she would not be allowed to advance to her third year of studies. After a preliminary discussion, the program head suggested another possibility, a difficult alternative, which would serve as a kind of test of Gila's earnestness – to repeat her second year of studies under clear and unequivocal stipulations, and with no guarantees regarding the future.

[16] Gila left the meeting in tears. The situation was undoubtedly painful. It was not at all clear how things would develop from this complicated point. After a week of indecision and debate, Gila sent an email, and asked to meet. In the meeting that was held, Gila said that, ever since the previous conversation, she was distraught, and that after consultation with friends and family, she decided to not abandon her studies and to accept the offer of repeating the second year. [17] The conversation was quiet, almost restrained. It seemed that Gila grasped that it was better to limit the scope of her statements. She simply notified the supervisor that she had significantly cut back her evening work hours, and that she had made an arrangement with her parents regarding funding of her tuition in exchange for a promise to devote more time and attention to her studies at the college. She noted that the previous week had been very difficult and meaningful for her, and that her decision concerning her forced her “to seriously think about what she wanted from herself” and “who she actually wanted to be.” When the program head presented her options for the upcoming academic year, Gila chose to remain a second year under the pedagogical supervision led by her current supervisor.

[19] At the commencement of the new academic year, Gila was invited for a conversation in which the supervisor reiterated what had taken place over the past year – the conversation was businesslike and dealt mainly with possible strategies for overcoming the difficulties and failures that had occurred in the past. It was explained to her that, despite her apprehensions, the supervisor had chosen to place her this year in a higher level class (5th grade) so that she could exercise her knowledge acquisition skills. [20] The supervisor asked that she keep ‘knowledge notebooks’ in which she could summarize material from a diversity of sources and raise questions and thoughts regarding each lesson she taught. Gila consulted the supervisor regarding background material for the lessons she prepared – and insisted on meeting for feedback after writing each lesson plan or pedagogical composition throughout her didactics training. The improvement was tangible and clear: the lessons she taught were more rich, confident, and dialogic. Lesson plans were submitted without typographical errors (sometimes in a florid and artificial language indicative of an effort that was not always successful). The papers she turned in were still of a low level, but they were always submitted on time, and it was evident that she invested quite a lot of thought and effort in them. Gila also took pains to arrive to her classes on time.

[21] When Gila started to receive positive feedback from the mentor teacher and supervisor regarding the lessons she taught, she began walking tall – it was clear that the difficult process that she had undergone, the misgivings, and the tangible price she had to pay for her earlier conduct had transformed her attitude towards the teaching profession. In brief discussions that were held with the pedagogical supervisor, Gila said that she viewed the profession as a calling, not just for her students but also for herself. She contended further that she understood now the price she had to pay in order to be a teacher. Her ‘knowledge notebooks’ filled up with meticulous writing. The folder of articles she collected and read, while copiously marking and highlighting them, thickened from lesson to lesson. [22] After the first semester, and in light of Gila's encouraging progress, the program head decided to assemble a feedback and future planning session with her. In this meeting, the pedagogical supervisor expressed his satisfaction with Gila's performance, and even brought forth support for such from her work. Gila, for her part, attested that her expulsion from the program helped her to regain her senses, and to realize the gravity of her situation. She emphasized further that the discussions and the recommendations she received from the training staff helped her to translate the sense of ‘reality shock’ that she felt after her expulsion into a genuine work plan with clear limits of conduct. It was evident that Gila was proud of the praise she received – she presented her work – her lesson plans and her ‘knowledge notebooks,’ and said that she was prouder now than she had ever been in the course of her training as a teacher.