The Impact of the Assessment of Practice Teaching on Beginning Teaching:
Learning To Ask Different Questions

By Lily Orland-Barak

In her first year of teaching Liz, who had graduated from a two- year university teacher training program in 1998 and had received an award as outstanding student-teacher of English, wrote the following story:

> In our everyday work, we teachers are expected to be diplomats, philosophers, psychologists, referees, police people, quiz program conductors, and an authority on almost everything. My story is not a fairy tale, but a true story about a boy, who hardly comes to my lessons. Our 'romance' started at the beginning of the year when Dotan kept interrupting everyone around him, and coming late constantly to class, and as a result I couldn't teach much. That day, when he came in late again, I asked him to stand for a few seconds. Of course he refused. He threw his bag on the floor and left the room in anger. Then he blew back into the room and yelled, 'I swear I'll kill you !' I was shocked. I had never been threatened before, certainly not by a pupil. . . . . . . And just like 'the never ending story,' this also seems endless. Now, towards the end of the year, he comes some of the time but simply does nothing. I can't teach . . . and I have tried to turn to him with a positive and encouraging approach, but nothing is really changing. How should I go from here ? What can I do ???

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Liz's story is compelling in that it foregrounds the incongruence between her success in practice teach-

ing and her perceived disappointment and sense of defeat as a first year teacher. Developmentally, her story corroborates the discontinuity of the passage from student teaching to teaching, supporting what research on teacher learning and professional development makes clear: prospective and novice teachers' commonly expressed fear is that they will "never know enough to teach" and never succeed in ensuring control, usually perceived as a prerequisite for successful student learning (Britzman, 1991). The shattering of Liz's initial idealistic beliefs about a liberal and humanistic orientation towards teaching is also well documented in the literature of learning to teach (Calderhead, 1991; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996) and so is the emergence of a more practical, realistic and, in a way, sarcastic view of teaching (Johnston, 1994), in which idealistic child-focused beliefs shift from helping pupils to managing pupils (Birrell, 1995; Hollingsworth et al 1993, Rust, 1994).

Yet, despite emergent understandings of the inevitable gap between teaching in a practice teaching context and teaching in a "real life" context as revealed by research on novices' induction into teaching, Liz's story is disturbing when examined against her teacher education program's assessment of her as an outstanding student teacher and leads me to question the significance of the assessment of practice teaching for novices' performance in their first year of teaching. The present article adds to the recently emerging body of research on the relationship of the assessment of practice teaching to the first years of teaching (Rust & Bullmaaster, 1999; Rust, 2001), to better understand how the assessment of practice teaching, perceived as among the chief "gatekeeping" instruments for the profession as well as predictors of prospective teachers' success, can be designed to assist and prepare novices for their induction into the profession. Two questions constitute the focus of my inquiry: One focuses on the impact of the assessment of practice teaching on teaching; the other on the synchrony between assessment and performance in the passage from practice teaching to teaching.

The Teaching Practicum:
Issues Of Context And Assessment

In her seminal work "Practice Makes Practice," Deborah Britzman (1991) discusses the problems that prospective teachers encounter in transposing knowledge and experience:

> The trivialization of knowledge becomes most evident when prospective teachers leave their university course work and attempt through classroom teaching, to render this knowledge pedagogical and relevant.... The fragmentation—between theory and practice—is most apparent when prospective teachers live the dramatic shift from learning about teaching in university settings to teaching in actual classrooms. Throughout student teaching, it becomes the work of prospective teachers to put into practice the knowledge obtained from university courses. At

the same time, they are expected to transform this received classroom knowledge, shifting from a student's perspective to that of a teacher. However, this transformation . . . is highly problematic. (p.46)

Britzman's theorizing scaffolds the complexities inherent in the passage from student teacher to teacher and challenges us to re-examine our approach to both the structure and validation of the practice teaching experience. Indeed, the last decade of research on teacher learning has seen numerous programmatic agendas designed to address the conditions by which the structure of practicum settings in teacher education programs can become an occasion for smoothing the passage from student teaching to teaching (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Focusing on the impact of the ecology of practice teaching settings (the type of classroom, school culture, curriculum, community) on student teacher development, research studies point to the effect of socializing pressures of the field (Britzman, 1991; Zeichner & Gore, 1990); to the crucial role of the cooperating teacher as teacher educator, mentor, and reflective coach (Schon, 1987; Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Calderhead, 1991; Elliot & Calderhead, 1993, Maynard & Furlong, 1993; McIntyre, Hagger, & Wilkin, 1993) to the importance of preparing student teachers for managing with differences across contexts of practice (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990), and to the significance of creating practicum contexts that allow for experimenting with low-risk conditions, providing protected yet authentically complex opportunities for engaging in vicarious teaching tasks (Feiman-Nemser, 1990), and for developing a sense of self efficacy as future teachers (Mulhound & Wallace, 2001).

The study of practicum settings has also focused on examining the implications of the assessment of practice teaching for advancing prospective teachers' understandings of their experiences in the first years of teaching. Guyton and McIntyre (1990) remind us of the stated value of formative and summative evaluation of student teachers to serve purposes of gatekeeping or control of entry into the profession, of differentiation according to competency levels, of feedback for program modification, and for the validation of the program's goals (p.525). Drawing on studies that investigated the structure of the assessment process at various developmental levels, they argue for the need to make explicit the assessment of different competencies at different levels, and in doing so, mitigate the widespread illusion (and subsequent disappointment) that high achievement in practice teaching is a predictor of success in teaching.

Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2001) suggest that teacher education programs include the use of authentic assessments of teaching, (including cases, exhibitions of performance-, portfolio-, and problem-based inquiries) as opportunities for evaluating teachers' thinking and actions in situations that are experience-based and problem oriented and that include or simulate actual acts of teaching. These assessment tools, they contend, might better reflect the complexity of teaching and eventually help novices to manage within the contextualized nature of teaching and learning (p. 524).

The Study

My interest in pursuing this inquiry was actually triggered by Liz's first year story. Having been her university professor in the didactic seminar course for the teaching of English as a foreign language, reading her story echoed numerous stories that former student teachers in their first year had shared with me (Orland, 2000) and challenged me to reconsider the learning value of their assessment as student teachers for making sense of the first teaching experiences. Did Liz ever imagine that the outstanding assessment of her performance in practice teaching would be negated by the difficulties that she was experiencing in her first years of teaching? If so, what is the value of the assessment of practice teaching, and how can student teachers *make use* of their assessment to mediate understandings in their real life teaching contexts?

Research Design

To address the above questions, I designed an interpretive, qualitative case study (Orland, in progress) that focuses on the perspectives of five student teachers of English deemed outstanding by their teacher education program. My decision to chose exemplary student teachers in exemplary placements grew out of the conviction that although these students may not be representative of a larger population of student teachers, focusing on our best students in optimal teaching contexts may help us to establish a clearer vision of what we can hope to accomplish (LaBoskey, 1994; Shulman,1992) and consequently identify a possible threshold of optimal conditions for learning to teach.

The participants were young women in their middle twenties, highly moti-vated, verbal, and academically successful with an overall average grade of 95 percent in their practice teaching (one day a week for two consecutive years) and in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) didactic seminar conducted parallel to their practice teaching—four academic hours, once a week, for two consecutive years (see Appendix 4). All finished their studies between 1998-2000 in an Israeli teacher education program. All had described their practice teaching placements as successful and had been assessed using both formative and summative tools, through shared processes of negotiation between the student teacher, the cooper-ating teacher and the university supervisor (see Appendices 1, 2, 3). Thus, I was looking at exemplary cases in exemplary placements and with multiple alternative assessment protocols —supposedly, an ideal scenario of conditions for predicting success in subsequent teaching experiences. I wondered.

Liz (pseudonym) was one of the five "exemplary" English student teachers who agreed to participate in the study. I have chosen to focus on her because she was particularly articulate in her analysis of the passage from practice teaching to teaching.

Data Sources

Data was collected from each participant separately from a variety of sources: (1) The student teacher's portfolio compiled throughout the school year and submitted at the end of the academic year to the university professor; (2) a summative practice teaching evaluation form completed by the student's cooperating teacher/mentor; (3) field notes of feedback sessions with each student at the end of practice teaching; (4) interviews-as-conversations with each student once inducted into the school system for at least one year; and (5) written stories about the first year of teaching.

Data Analysis Process

Data was analyzed qualitatively using methods of within and across-case inductive analysis (Patton, 1990). Drawing on Donald Freeman's framework (1996) of representational and presentational levels of analysis of language data, the student teachers' portfolios, which constituted the major source of data, were examined for recurrent *themes* (the representational level) and for how the *language* used reflected statements of connections to the social-professional system within which the student teachers mentors functioned, as well as levels of reflective thinking (the presentational level). Analysis of the data entailed identifying emerging patterns within the data for each portfolio, recording excerpts from the data that supported the patterns, examining them against other data sources within cases for triangulation purposes, and analyzing emergent patterns across data sources. The process was hermeneutical, allowing for recurrent cycles of "close interpretive reading" (Kelchtermans, 1996).

Drawing on these multiple, triangulated data sources, this paper describes and interprets the assessment of Liz's process of learning to teach as it connects to her attributions of her first year teaching experiences. The narrative represents the synthesis of emergent understandings of her learning and of her performance as revealed through the formative and summative assessment of her practice teaching portfolio, the final evaluation report, her first year story, and her expressed views about practice teaching from the interview-as-conversation conducted in her third year of teaching.

Assessing Liz's Practice Teaching Experience

One of the major components of the student teachers' assessment in their didactic seminar at the university was the portfolio that they had to compile throughout the school year (see Appendix 5). A major section of the portfolio is designed around encouraging students to link between the theoretical issues dealt with in the academic sessions and their realization in the classroom by establishing focuses of observation that they were asked to critically relate to in their writing. In making these connections, students were also asked to document their develop-

ing understandings of a specific focus of interest as they observed their cooperating teachers during practice teaching.

Noticing and Establishing Links

Liz chose classroom management as her main focus. Indeed, as her portfolio entries reveal, Liz *claimed* to have gained important insights about classroom management throughout the year of student teaching. In her first portfolio entry in November, Liz devoted a major section of her writing to the issue of discipline,

> One of my major interests is how to control a class and everything else included under the category of "classroom management." From our short observation, we could definitely notice ingrained class routines and a well disciplined class. As we learned later, it is the result of the teacher's consistent behavior. Discipline and control are an integral part of the lesson. In fact I am going to make them my personal objectives and focus on them throughout the year.

In my evaluation of Liz's learning from her first entries, I wrote that besides *being determined* to make classroom management her personal agenda, Liz was already *noticing and establishing links* between teacher behavior patterns and classroom control. Moreover, she could *identify* the kind of behavior on the part of her cooperating teacher that assisted her in managing the class. She had begun to make *assertions* regarding the role that discipline and control play in the course of a lesson. At the time, I thought that, unlike most novices at this stage concerned with strategic compliance (Lacey, 1977), Liz had made rather rapid and even impressive progress from documenting her observations mainly at descriptive, functional levels of performance (Bullough & Knowles, 1992; Britzman, 1991; Kagan, 1992; Zeichner & Gore, 1990) to reflecting on her observations at higher levels. She was writing as an advanced beginner, attempting to provide explanations, to formulate educational principles, and to articulate a rationale for the actions that she was witnessing (Sparks-Langer & Simons, 1991).

As early as her third portfolio entry (beginning of December), Liz already begins to *query* the feasibility of modeling observed classroom management procedures for her own teaching. Indeed, by LaBoskeys' reflective scale (1994), she would score quite high on her ability to carefully weigh and consider the limitations of her observations for her particular context, and for using more than just a "what works criterion." Similarly, using Sparks-Langer and Simons's evaluation of reflection (1991), she would score high on "explanation with principle, theory, and consideration of context factors" (level six) and on "explanation with consideration of ethical, moral and political issues" (level seven-the highest level).

In my comments, I wrote that Liz was displaying a high level of *awareness* about herself and of her expectations as a future teacher, as well as a realistic and judicious view of what she can take from her observations to her own context. I also noted that she was able to *attribute* her teacher's flexible behavior to her status of socialization

at school, evident of a high level of sensitivity to the micropolitics of teaching (Hoyle, 1982; Blase, 1991; Kelchtermans, 2000) and to the contextual perspective of how the school system operates and affects teaching (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Her December entry is a good example:

> Sarah, my cooperating teacher is in her 13th year of teaching and therefore anything she does should be taken with a grain of salt. I mean that as a new teacher it would be problematic if I adopted her ways because they are too flexible at times. She has "gained her spot" in the eyes of the students and in the eyes of the teachers. This makes a big difference in attitude. On the other hand, I myself am not such a strict person so it is not easy for me to act as one (being very different from Sarah)…

Articulating Educational Principles

Towards the middle of her practice teaching (January), Liz began to show evidence of learning *how to act* in order to resolve classroom management problems. Critically relating to how Sarah deals with late comers when "she tells them to come to her at the end of the lesson and welcomes them with a smile," she makes an assertion about her *own educational stance* on the issue, *appropriating* it to her context as beginner teacher: "as a beginning teacher I think you have to be strict with latecomers…because they try to test your boundaries . . . I don't like to have kids miss lessons, but sometimes it becomes a matter of educational principle, otherwise the class understands that it's legitimate to arrive late time after time."

In my assessment journal, I noted that Liz had begun to *articulate a personal educational principle* that I assumed would then guide her somehow in her own teaching in the future. I also wrote that she was learning to examine the teacher-pupil dyad from the point of view of borders and regulations. And, in doing so, she was preparing herself for the future with a strategic plan of action for deliberation. In LaBoskey's terms (1994), she was "showing signs of deliberation in setting the problem."

Developing Principles for Practice

As the year progressed, Liz began to construct an important educational principle around the issue of silence in classroom management. This was particularly evident in her seventh journal entry in the middle of the school year (March), where she analysed how two teachers in two different schools handled "silence" in the classroom. By way of comparing and contrasting, she managed to select from each case those aspects of behavior with which she identified. Towards the end of the entry, she consolidated her thoughts into the formulation of an educational principle to which she saw herself committed as a teacher: "Silence is built out of respect and motivation rather than fear":

> The absolute discipline in the Arab school was what amazed me most from the visit…at a certain point it seemed unbelievable. Perhaps the fact that there was no interaction

between the students contributed to the passive image I received. In Loren's class the interaction between the students made the lesson much livelier, engaging the students in constant effort to search for information and think on their own. In Samira's class it was much more difficult to sense this kind of atmosphere. . . .Despite her sitting down most of the time, her presence was meaningful and held everyone's attention guiding them in a totally structured way. In my opinion, this is one of her strongest skills and it is something that I would love to adopt: having all the pupils focused on her not based on the power of fear and threat but out of wanting to understand.

In my journal I wrote that Liz was not only *integrating understandings* from different teaching contexts, but also *appropriating* them towards the formulation of a personal educational theory in regard to classroom management, with consideration of ethical and moral implications.

Consolidating Progress

Let's recapitulate the assessment of Liz's developing concept of classroom management from her journal entries during practice teaching: Towards the end of her practice teaching, Liz had shown evidence of being aware that successful classroom management is an important educational agenda that she wants to pursue, of making links between patterns of teacher behavior and classroom control, of developing a realistic view of her expectations of herself as a future teacher and how they compare to her cooperating teacher's behavior and educational agenda, of being sensitive to contextual factors and to the micropolitics of the school as workplace, of beginning to formulate personal educational credos in relation to borders and regulations in classroom management, and of elaborating possible strategic plans of action as a future teacher: Indeed (as I thought then), an impressive record of a student teacher's progress.

My written evaluation of Liz's development and her own reflections about her progress and learning as surfaced in her portfolio also correlated very highly with her cooperating teacher's evaluation of her observations of Liz "in action" at the end of the year. In the summative assessment form, Sarah (her cooperating teacher) wrote: "Excellent lessons, interesting, well planned and challenging activities. Connects well with the pupils. Good management skills and classroom presence. Very reflective."

Yet, despite the high correspondence between the multiple alternative assessment forms, meant to estimate Liz's potential areas of success as a future teacher, the story of her first year of teaching falls short of action exactly at those points in which all three assessors, her cooperating teacher, Liz herself, and I, had claimed to have noticed noteworthy progress. Issues related to classroom management such as handling lateness, establishing borders, and managing silence out of motivation and respect rather than fear and punishment were manageable for her as a student teacher but not in her first year. Liz's plea for rescue at the end of her story "What shall I do now?'shattered the rigor of our assumptions about her performance.

Learning from the First Year of Teaching

How could the assessment of practice teaching have assisted Liz in managing her sense of defeat and frustration in the first year? With this question in mind, I approached Liz in her third year of teaching to gain her retrospective understanding of the assessment of practice teaching and its impact on teaching. I was particularly interested in learning whether Liz's in-depth reflections, connections, emergent educational theories, and critical standpoint towards her observations of teaching so lucidly articulated in her portfolio entries had assisted her in her first year. I was also interested in surfacing aspects of the experience of practice teaching that in her view had been left unattended in the assessment process and might have equipped her to better manage the passage from student teaching practice to teaching.

In our two hour interview-as-conversation, I asked Liz to read her first year story again. I then asked her to share with me her thoughts and ideas about the assessment of practice teaching as she recalled it. I was keen to know what she thought she might have been able to draw from the assessment of practice teaching to manage situations such as the one she describes in her first year story.

Liz alluded to three important dimensions of her practice teaching experience that were not integrated into the assessment process:

ᵛᴛ assessing how student teachers manage with potentially unsuccessful experiences;

ᵛᴛ assessing the ability to articulate process and conflicts " on the way";

ᵛᴛ assessing the ability to problematize teaching beyond the specific situation.

In the sections that follow, I examine Liz's interpretation of these three dimensions of her experience, all of which are resonant with recent studies on the assessment of practice teaching.

Assessing How Student Teachers Manage with Potentially Unsuccessful Experiences

In our interview, Liz said,

There were very few opportunities where I had to cope with classes that I really didn't want to teach . . . like we would always ask to teach in the first periods, the well behaved classes, and everybody kind of protected us from the really hard classes, and from teaching at late hours in the day. We rarely had to dive in deep waters and experience frustration. We were too protected and I know (pause) we also avoided these classes on purpose but then they [the cooperating teachers] didn't push us enough or encourage us enough to give it a try, to experience failure and then to learn from that.

Liz's comment challenges the prevailing assumption that student teachers be placed in non-threatening classrooms in order to develop their sense of self efficacy (Lantz, 1964; Bandura, 1997). It pushes us towards a reconceptualization put

forward by Rushton (2001) that posits student teaching as an opportunity for interns to face the challenges of potentially "threatening" teaching placements, provided the necessary support and preparation is given by the teacher training program. In his narrative study case study of student-teaching in an inner city school, Rushton found that in the face of the severity of the practice teaching environment, his focal student teacher rose above the conflicts, difficulties, and "culture shock" that she had initially encountered by learning to accept the dissonance that the harsh realities of teaching in the inner city brought (p.158). By Liz's criteria, Rushton's focal student teacher should be assessed on her capacity to articulate the dissonance between her expectations of teaching and the reality of teaching in inner-city schools or in settings that she finds challenging.

Assessing Students" Ability To Articulate Process and Conflicts "On The Way" and to Problematize Teaching

> We were never given feedback on how we managed or not to cope with conflicts and questions that we raised during planning and throughout the lesson, not because there was no time for it or because the teacher refused to talk about these things but I think because we both thought that that wasn't supposed to be the purpose of our evaluation and of our feedback session.

Liz's claim implies that the assessment of practice teaching surfaces aspects of teaching that are only indirectly visible during the classroom portion of the lesson. I found her comment particularly interesting because it focuses on teaching as dilemma-oriented thus valuing critical exploration and inquiry as important aspects of effective teaching and it suggests that we extend the focus of assessment from observable performance to the thinking and decision making processes that precede and follow action.

Liz's contention that students be assessed on their ability to articulate their process of lesson planning and the conflicts that they manage as they implement their planning speaks to Darling-Hammond and Snyder's (2000) notion of "authentic assessment" as an integrative framework for assessing both visible and "invisible" aspects of lesson planning and performance (p. 527). It also connects to studies that suggest providing structured and unstructured opportunities for students to reflect on their practice, entertain uncertainty, and articulate the thinking that goes on during the planning of lessons (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Maynard & Furlong, 1993).

Liz elaborated this point further on by contending that beyond opportunities for articulating their own thinking about teaching, student teachers lacked opportunities to "read into" the teachers' process of thinking and planning and use these as occasions for learning:

> I would really have liked to get more into Sarah's head [the cooperating teacher]: how she thinks and plans her lessons, the changes that she makes as she plans and in action, how long it took her to plan a lesson. I found myself sitting hours planning lessons

like I was drowning in my first year. I would have liked to be more accompanied or aware of the process the teacher goes through and also how she manages with problematic kids on an on going basis. Does she share her problem with other teachers? Is that O.K?. Now, after three years, I know that it is important to share problems with other teachers because probably I am not the only one. I have learned that conflicts are not a matter to hide and it doesn't mean you are incompetent. I wish that had been given more space in practice teaching!

Mentors' unwillingness to expose their own conflicts and uncertainties is well documented in the literature. From recent research studies we learn that mentors are reluctant to expose student teachers to problematic classes both due to their "protective attitude" towards the mentee and to the widespread contention that a student's failure to manage a particular class while being observed by the university supervisor is indirectly an indication of the mentor's own inability (McIntyre, Hagger & Wilkin, 1993). Mentors/cooperating teachers, writes Lacey (1977), are unwilling to disclose their own pitfalls for fear that these might impinge on their professional image and choose instead to remain silent within the closed doors of their classrooms. This "silence," as Clarke's (1995) study of student teacher reflection suggests, leads to emergent tensions between planning and performance in practicum settings—the very situation that Liz's comment identifies.

Liz continues:

It was all too neat. We weren't exposed to too many conflicts that we might have to deal with when we start teaching. We spoke about things that we had problems about within our own lessons but not beyond that. There are so many things that we could have known in advance—kinds of dilemmas that we might have to face and how to manage them. If we knew about them in advance, we could have used that as information when we encounter a similar case. And that could also be part of our assessment not just our performance but being evaluated on how we deal with these "as if'situations.

What Can We Learn about the Assessment of Practice Teaching from Liz's Comments?

Put together, Liz's suggestions and comments, most of which find support in recent research studies, yield the following story: *If* student teachers are given the opportunity to manage in potentially unsuccessful experiences, to articulate their conflicts, to problematize their teaching beyond the specific situation, and to transform conflicts into occasions for learning, and *if* these aspects of the teaching practice experience are integrated into the assessment process, *then* we can assume that the hardships of the first years of teaching can be mitigated. Assessing these competencies might assist students to mediate understandings in "real life" teaching by drawing on those *similar* situations that they had to manage in their practice teaching. However, I do not think it is as simple as Liz's syllogism suggests.

To better understand Liz's "*if . . . then"* view of the teaching practicum

conditions, I resorted to Schutz's (1970) theory of motivation. Schutz contends that in the process of learning (in our case learning to teach), people (in our case student teachers) construct conscious guidelines or "dramatic rehearsals" for future actions. These dramatic rehearsals enable them to imagine or fantasize the planned action as already finished, enabling in turn, the anticipation or "typifications" of future events and situations. In the process of typifications, people are driven by two typical " dealizations": that of "and so forth and so on" or "because" motives anchored in past experiences (what happened in the past can be projected onto the future) and that of "I can do it again" (or I can repeat my actions in new situations). These idealizations, Schutz argues, enable people to express their confidence in the basic structure of the life world, perceiving it as remaining unchanged and reliable for future conduct.

Liz's comments about an assessment scheme conducive to "rehearsing situations" which can be drawn from as "a pool of past experiences'speak to Schutz's (1970) theory of motivation. Her "*if . . . then"* story can be interpreted as follows: *Because* they (the student teachers) were too protected and not pushed or encouraged enough to experience failure, they could *not rehearse* for similar future actions or plan actions *as anticipations* of future events. *Because* they were never given feedback on whether and how they managed to cope with conflicts and questions that they raised during their planning and throughout the lesson, they could not prepare for *similar* situations of uncertainty in the future. *Because* it was all too neat and they weren't exposed to too many conflicts that they would *inevitably* have to deal with in teaching, they couldn't *plan* in advance. Had she known these things in advance, Liz says, she could have *used* the experience as useful information to *typify* similar cases in the future. The assessment of these "as if situations" would enable her, in Schutz's terms, to build a pool of typical expectations in typical contexts, to construct an operational plan and "dramatic rehearsal for future action," to anticipate future events, to idealize that what had happened in the past will recur in the future and to develop a sense of competence that she "can do it again;" that she can repeat her actions.

These idealizations would enable her to confidently construct an unchanged structure of her future teaching which she could rely on for future conduct by forming *typical expectations for typical contexts,* and consequently assist her in dealing with situations such as the problem with Dotan. However, as Schutz (1970) contends, absolute certainty is impossible: During the execution of a project, the actor's system of relevance inevitably undergoes changes resulting in a different perception and understanding of the situation, and as Schutz notes, "Foresight differs from hindsight" (pgs. 26-27).

Implications For Practice Teaching

How can we equip Liz and her counterparts in other teacher education programs

with tools for managing "the inevitable deviations of results from anticipations" and for managing with the sure knowledge that "foresight ultimately differs from hindsight"? What *focal issues* or *questions* might prepare student teachers for managing within the contextualized and unique nature of their future teaching situations while integrating the three dimensions of practice teaching mentioned by Liz? What kind of interpretive lenses should we wear to examine students' "texts" in order to surface and develop their potential to construct a formative and dynamic vision of learning to teach while simultaneously recognizing that past experiences cannot be replicated and developing a sense of self confidence and efficacy?

In the section that follows I address these questions by proposing a formative assessment scheme that focuses on the development of student teachers" ability to *conceptualize* (rather than generalize), as they examine how experiences *differ across contexts* by *drawing implications* from past experiences (rather than searching for replications of the same experience in new contexts).

Conceptualization Rather Than Generalization

Let me draw a distinction between generalization and conceptualization. Within the framework of practice teaching, to generalize would mean to be able to project oneself into the future as a teacher functioning in certain teaching situations satisfactorily by replicating experiences of a similar kind undergone during practice teaching. To conceptualize would mean, instead, to make "educated conjectures" (rather than predictions) about one's functioning in the future as a result of past experiences.

As Schutz (1970) contends, the drive to generalize experience reflects our need to feel secure that once we have experienced something we can safely transfer our understandings and skills to new situations by saying to ourselves to "I can do it again." Similarly, in our assessment of practice teaching, although aware of its highly contextualized and unique nature, we tend to make generalizations with a predictive stance towards future success (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990), mainly because assessment functions as a gatekeeper into the educational system. We want to be able to predict at the end of the teacher training program that students who obtain a teaching certificate will eventually be able to transfer and "replicate" their learning in their new teaching contexts. Driven by this legitimate concern, we tend to somewhat overemphasize the search for generalities in teaching at the expense of focusing on helping new teachers make sense of the singularity of each teaching context.

Adopting a stance that values *conceptualizations over generalizations* in our formative assessment of practice teaching would thus imply "reading into' student teachers' accounts of their practice with new interpretive lenses, namely, those that focus on students' ability to *discern uniqueness across contexts.* In Liz's case, it would call for a re-interpretation of both her insights about teaching as surfaced in her portfolio and in her first year story, and our own rendering of her insights as indicative of her process of learning to teach.

What does this mean operationally? Let us re-examine my assessment of Liz's progress from this new formative perspective.

Re-reading Liz's Texts: Asking Different Kinds of Questions

In my consolidation of Liz's process of learning to teach I had noted that Liz had shown evidence of managing various skills and of beginning to develop a personal educational theory. What message might Liz have gotten from my evaluation of her learning? Probably something like: "You are on the right track because you have successfully managed to internalize important pedagogical and educational messages which you can generalize for future actions. You can do it again successfully in your new teaching context."

Re-reading Liz's texts would entail asking different kinds of questions about her account of learning, namely, questions that are exploratory in nature and guided by presuppositions that are interactional and systemic and that assess the student teacher's ability to *make connections*, to *compare* and *contrast* between teachers, pupils, classrooms, schools, actions, perceptions, feelings, events, beliefs, contexts, etc. For example, Liz's comment about her learning from observing the teacher's consistency in ingraining class routines can be furthered explored through questions that encourage her to identify how the particularities of the classroom and of the teacher's style shape the way in which consistency operates for her as a tool for classroom management. At the same time, Liz can be encouraged to analyze and envision other scenarios with different classes and/or different teachers in which consistency might be made clear by analysis of different behavior patterns. Questions such as: How is consistency reflective in the teacher's actions and patterns of behavior? How do these patterns change as she moves from class to class? What patterns of behavior remain the same? What problems might you encounter in your teaching if you were to adopt these behaviors? How do different observations of classes extend your understanding of the notion of consistency? What might happen in a class where pupils are not used to these rules in other subjects? What might the principal say? How might the principal react? How might other teachers in the school react? What happened in this particular situation that you want to continue to have happen in your own classes and what problems or barriers would you expect to encounter on the way?

Let us consider another excerpt from my assessment of Liz's progress. As the year moved along, I claimed that Liz had begun to construct an important educational principle around the issue of silence in classroom management. By way of comparing and contrasting how two teachers in two different schools handle "silence" in the classroom, I contend that she had managed to select from each case those aspects of behavior with which she identified and consequently consolidate them into the formulation of an educational principle to which she saw herself committed as a teacher: "Silence is built out of respect and motivation rather than fear."

In my assessment of this particular entry I wrote that Liz had begun to show

evidence of her ability to *appropriate* what she was learning from her cooperating teacher for her particular context as beginner teacher. What I did not realize then was that beyond appropriating the behaviors that she was witnessing for her particular needs, Liz was actually making a generalization (rather than a conceptualization) of her learning about classroom management: Although her contention might sound like a conceptualization "silence should be based on motivation rather than on power or fear," notice the statement that ends that particular entry: "her presence was meaningful and held everyone's attention guiding them in a totally structured way. In my opinion, this is one of her strongest skills and it is something that I would love to adopt—having all the pupils focused on her not based on the power of fear and threat but out of wanting to understand." Of course, as we witness in her first year story, Liz was not able to have all the pupils focused "on her" and certainly not based on their need to want to learn. And, besides, is this something that we would want student teachers to replicate?

The distress that Liz experiences with Dotan's resistance shows us something about her lack of preparation to think in different terms about classroom management from what she had observed in her practicum. Thus, Liz had shown evidence of her ability to compare and contrast, but not of her ability to problematize her convictions in order to consider new possibilities that she had not thought of before. To develop this perspective, I could have asked her questions such as: Who were the students in Loren's lesson who were engaged in what you interpret as constant effort to search for information? And what do you mean by constant effort? Does Sarah have the same interprtation of engagement that you have? What would you do if you realized that not everybody was "on task" as you thought? What would Sarah have done? How do you know that students were thinking "on their own?" What would have happened if Loren hadn't gotten any responses? What do you mean by "there was no interaction between the students?" What are the different ways in which pupils can interact? How do you know that despite Samira's sitting down most of the time her presence was meaningful? And was she actually holding everyone's attention? Who wasn't? Is guiding the pupils in a totally structured way something desirable? If you were to adopt it in your own teaching what problems might you envision?

Reading Liz's story of her first year of teaching wearing her "if-then" interpretive lenses enables us to better understand the source of her intermittent frustration: In face of a new context she cannot "resort to familiar instances in the past" to generalize from and consequently find a solution to her new situation. "I had never been cursed by a pupil before," she says, implying that this is a situation that she is unable to grasp because it is new to her teaching repertoire. She cannot replicate from past experience. And, although we all draw on past experience to make sense of new situations, Liz feels impotent to resort to other instances in the past in which she had felt insulted or offended to "guide" her as frames for possible courses of action because she is searching for an exact past version of her present dilemma. Put differently: Her generalization had blocked her.

Conceptualizing Experience as Part of Formative Assessment

To push for conceptualization in our formative assessment would mean to encourage student teachers to make educated conjectures about teaching and learning as she examines the feasibility of their understandings for different contexts of teaching. It also means assessing their ability to problematize what works for the particular situation when transferring these understandings to other contexts. Conceptualizing also entails drawing implications rather than expecting successful replications of the experience. Pushing for conceptualization in our teacher education programs would mean encouraging student teachers to reflect on Shulman's (1986) question, " What is this a case of?," both on the level of " what does it represent in my teaching?" as well as on the level of " how would this case [of classroom management in Liz's case] differ from other similar cases of classroom management that I might encounter in the future?" Training for conceptualization and assessing the construct accordingly also entails assisting student teachers in the *articulation* of issues and questions such as: What am I learning about my *developing* concept of discipline? What teaching and learning conditions *typify* my particular teaching situation and how might these alter in new contexts? How might different interactions influence decision making? .

Training ourselves and our student teachers to ask these kinds of questions within a formative assessment scheme can provide a framework or structure within which student teachers can articulate the hardships brought about by the discrepancies encountered in their new contexts. Thus, the provision of opportunities to teach in hard classes, to reflect on before, during, and after lesson preparation and implementation, as Liz suggests, need to be framed within a formative assessment structure that renders the formulation of reflexive and exploratory questions that problematize student teachers "if . . . then perspectives" about teaching and learning.

Assisting students to conceptualize rather than to generalize from potentially unsuccessful experiences; to draw implications (and not replications) from the conflicts that they encounter "on the way," and to problematize teaching across contexts would prepare students for confronting the multidimensional, simultaneous, immediate, and unpredictable reality of classrooms (Doyle, 1977), whereby "learning to teach involves learning the texture of the classroom and the sets of behavior congruent with the environmental demands of that setting" (Doyle , 1977, p. 31) as well as to make judgments about the fit between particular skills, constraints, demands, and opportunities of the material environment of the classroom about the appropriateness of particular styles or techniques for present circumstances (Feiman-Nemser , 1994, p. 219).

Conclusion

The writing of this article was triggered by the daunting story of the first year

of teaching written by Liz, a former student teacher who had been assessed as exemplary student in her practice teaching. It was motivated by the question of the significance of the assessment of practice teaching for novices' performance in their first year of teaching. As Liz shared with me her ideas about what might have helped her to mitigate her sense of success in practice teaching and her sense of defeat as a first year teacher, I was particularly captured by her "if . . . then" perception of the conditions in the assessment of practice teaching that she thought would eventually assist in mitigating that gap. Resorting to aspects of Schutz's (1970) theory of motivation, I could make better sense of the nature of her "if . . . then" views about learning and development, and, at the same time, rethink a framework for re-examining Liz's texts. The process entailed developing an orientation towards exploring and problematizing *the uniqueness* of the experience of learning to teach in a particular context and towards assisting student teachers to conceptualize experiences that that are similar *but not identical*. Operationally , this necessitates, I believe, identifying student teachers' moments of crisis and doubt, and developing them into occasions for learning. These 'subtexts,' as Kate McKenna (1997) argues, are usually emotional, inter-subjective, and unconscious aspects of pedagogical interactions which are usually left unexplored in the discourse of teaching. Delineating the specificities of moments of crisis in the classroom and the conjec-tures informing those moments, as McKenna suggests, would surface the "lot more [of what is] going on in the classroom than what was being spoken about or overtly addressed" (p. 49). Attending to the subtexts of classroom interactions entails developing new grounds for dialogue to occur, grounds such as formative assess-ment schemes that integrate problematizing and conceptualizing as part of the evaluation of the process of learning to teach.

Finally, Liz's assertions have surfaced the controversial nature of her views about learning to teach as well as of the messages about effective teaching implied in the design of our multiple/formative assessment program.

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Appendix I

Formative Evaluation during Classroom Observation and Debriefing

Classroom Observation and Debriefing	
Student Teacher: Class: Date:	
Agreed focus: (For example: lesson ending)	Agreed method of observation: (Example: Noting instructions & observing students actions)
Notes relating to focus	

Strengths displayed by student teacher	Strategies /techniques recommended
Example Clear instructions— that they were to write down H.W. Good timing—enough time given for both recording H.W. & packing away.	*Example* Ensure pupils who can't find H.W. diary are told to write H.W. down elsewhere. Don't allow anyone to leave until everyone has finished copying H.W. assignment.

Other points for discussion

For example
What strategies can you think of to deal with latecomers?
What are quick and effective ways to distribute resources?
What are quick and effective ways to get to know the students?

Appendix 2

Formative Evaluation of Students' Learning from the Practice Teaching Experience

Learning from Practice Teaching: General

What are you learning from the practice teaching experience ?

Please relate to these aspects of your learning as you progress during the year:
* about yourselves
* about your new role as a teacher
* about pupils as learners
* about teaching English in high school
* about school
* about the ways in which pupils learn
* about the ways in which teachers teach
* about the English program
* about what motivates pupils
* about conditions that promote learning
* about conditions that hinder learning
* about your strengths
* about your fears
* about your uncertainties

Fill in these beginnings as many times as you can during the year. What can you say about your development as a teacher?

Make sure you document your progress by stating the date of your reflection and any other relevant detail concerning the particular experience/incident you are basing your reflections on:

I felt.....

I was surprised to learn that.....

I realized that ......

I have changed my ideas about....

I wonder....

I thought that.....

New questions....

I could connect what I observed to things I learned....

I was reminded of....

Teaching looks like....

Now I know that.....

Appendix 3

Criteria for Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Teaching Work

This form upon which the final summative assessment is based is completed by the student teacher, the cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor at least three times a year.

		Needs Improve-ment	Satisfactory	Very Good	Comments
1. Outside the lesson ST	Written lesson plans. Stated objectives. Preparation of materials ahead of time. Lesson as part of unit. Awareness of the social and educational climate of the school.				
2. During the lesson	Language proficiency and clarity in: Speaking, Writing. Knowledge of subject matter. Appropriate procedures. Sensitivity to individual and class. Understanding of learning task.				

		Needs Improve-ment	Satisfactory	Very Good	Comments
	Responsive to pupils' needs and performance. Posture and movement.				
	Pupils are actively engaged on task for appropriate amount of time.				
3 . Management & Organization	Efficient discipline and classroom management. Clarity of instruction. Appropriate reaction to unexpected situations.				
4. Flow of the lesson	Openings, closings, transitions. Pace and timing. Variety and sequence of activities. Integration and development of content.				

5. Reflections after the lesson:	
Categories of observation	
* Presence:	
* Voice:	
* Proficiency:	
* Attitude:	
* Management:	
* Organisation:	
* Materials:	
* Discourse:	
* Lesson plan and implementation:	

Appendix 4

Didactic Seminar Course Syllabus:
Teaching English as Foreign Language

Welcome to 'Teaching English as a Foreign Language' in Israel.

Aims of the course:
1. To develop tools for effective teaching practice.
2. To explore theoretical and practical issues related to the teaching of English.
3. To learn to reflect on aspects of your teaching.
4. To challenge your personal beliefs and attitudes to teaching and learning a foreign language.
5. To increase your self- awareness, confidence and independence as a future teacher and professional.

Content of the Course:
During both the seminar and the workshop we will focus on two aspects of language teaching which operate integratively in the classroom:
1. the content of language teaching and
2. the context of language teaching.

The content of language teaching includes principles and procedures of:
1. Teaching and learning language for Communication
2. Teaching and learning to function in the four domains of language: Social Interaction, Presentation, Appreciation of Language and Literature, Access to Information.
3 Teaching and learning vocabulary and grammar.

The context of language teaching includes:
1. classroom management and organization.
2. working with different levels of learners in a class.
3. adapting learning strategies to individual learning styles.
4. selecting and adapting materials ; working with a coursebook.
5. becoming familiar with the new curriculum for TEFL in Israel.
6. creating a context for communication in the classroom.
7. evaluating and testing language.
8. lesson/unit planning.

The Sessions:
The nature of the sessions will be interactive and relevant to your teaching practice in the classroom. Our goal is to try to integrate as closely as possible your experiences in the field with the theoretical principles of language teaching discussed in class. Thus, during the sessions you will be encouraged to try out new ideas and techniques and to reflect on your experience with your peers. You will also be expected to share your on-going experiences in the field and to reflect on these experiences as they relate to the principles of language learning and teaching, and as they contribute to your own learning and development.

Requirements of the course:
1. On-going readings and assignments.
2. Active participation in classwork

3. A reflective teaching portfolio. The portfolio should include:
    * two important learning experiences from your practice teaching.
    * one test: planning, administration, and evaluation.
    * two lesson plans and reflection on the implementation of the lesson.
    * your reflections on two relevant theoretical articles.
    * at least eight practical tips/activities that you observed/read about/heard/tried out in class.
    * one textbook evaluation.
4. For the seminar only: a case presentation of a long term Action Research project on a relevant aspect of your teaching.

Assessment:	Workshop	Seminar
Participation in classwork and presentations:	40%	30%
Portfolio:	60 %	30%
Project:	——	40%

We look forward to a fruitful and enjoyable year !

Appendix 5
Guidelines for Portfolio Writing

What is a portfolio? A portfolio is a collection of evidence that constitutes a compelling argument that a person is proficient or has made progress toward that state.

Purpose: to engage the teacher in a reflective process as s/he documents systematically professional growth and competence.

Remember !
1. When you create an entry, communicate the reason for that entry, that is:
    * what the entry is. * what it is evidence of. * why you believe it is valuable evidence.

2. When writing an entry in your portfolio, consider the following questions :
    Questions to guide your thinking
    Technical & Experiential
        What happened?
        Who was involved?
        What made it happen?
        What did it feel like? For whom?
        Why did it happen?
    Integrative & Conceptual
        How does it connect to something I have already learned?
        What is it an example of ?
        What is this a case of in my teaching?
    Personal
        How does the experience it connect to my personal history?
        How does it connect to my beliefs about education/teaching/learning?
    Deliberative
        What can I do next ?
        What do I need to improve?
        What will I not do again ?
        What would I try again but differently?