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Evolution of a Community of Practice in the Bedouin Preschool PDS Group Program: Feedback, Reflection, Identity, and Learning Traits

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One of the challenges of training teachers in the Academia Class Program in general, and in Bedouin society in particular, is to bridge the gap of identity among students and mentors. A gap exists between an academic field, which conveys knowledge, measures and evaluates, and a working arena, guiding and educating through social experience, knowledge development, and human growth. It is a gap between academic theory conveyed from above and personal grassroots knowhow which arises from field experience. This study explores attributes generating intrinsic learning, such as identity, inquisitiveness, and reflection. In the third year of training at the preschool academia program students are nearly full-fledged preschool teachers. This study followed the personal development and knowledge growth of students who studied reflectively actions bottom-up and top-down, gained feedback and modification, and repeated action, to achieve self-enhancement of professionalism as future preschool teachers.

Keywords: PDS (professional development schools), kindergarten, active learning, reflection, psychological safety, inquisitiveness

Context

The Academia Class (AC) Program (Ministry of Education, 2014) was launched in the 2016-2017 school year, with the objective of strengthening the partnership between academia, schools, and local authorities, by addressing three key challenges: (1) promoting meaningful learning in the classroom by integrating two adults co-working in classroom; (2) improving the training of students in training and the professional advancement of experienced teachers; (3) developing career tracks, from student through intern to teacher in training, with a pedagogical mentor appointed by the academic institution. The program was based on educational experiments relating to PDS (Professional Development Schools) processes developed in Israel and around the world in the last decade. Achva College, having signed up for the program from its commencement, has combined it with an internal process of motivating mentors and their classes to implement Engaging and Active project-based Learning (AEL). Upon entering the fourth year of implementing EAL in the college's school and kindergarten-teacher programs, we assumed the challenge of focusing on and deepening "meaningful learning" in the program for Arabic-speaking preschool students, both in teaching and learning at the college and at preschools involved

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in the program. The challenge of developing a partnership model between the academic institution and preschools was identified as a means of reducing the sense of detachment between the training system and the work of education in the field (ibid). This process at Achva College required a prior re-evaluation of the program, and during the activity, of students' lesson-plans and tasks and therefore, also of their mentors'. "We are like sailors who have to rebuild their ship on the open sea, without ever being able to dismantle it in dry-dock and reconstructed from its best components." (Neurath in Kilduff, Tsai, & Hanke, 2006, pp. 317-330). The research was conducted during the 2017-2018 school year and focused in the development of the culture and characteristics of AEL among mentors and students. Pedagogical mentors of 44 (all female) students participated in this study. These students participated in AP operating in more than 30 kindergartens in Bedouin communities in the Negev. The group of students and mentors worked in a pattern of continuous development, by way of design thinking.

Academia-Class (AC)

In their comprehensive paper, "The teacher research movement", Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) presented the foundations which the processes of self-research grants to student teachers' abilities and skills in their future work. PDS-based training programs allow the teacher to grow professionally through reflection, defined as "the crucible of action". Through such action, research processes develop, constituting essential engines of control, critique, and challenge. compared Jewish and Arab students' assessments of AC processes to the traditional model. The qualitative Ronen, Daniel-Sa'ar, and Holtzblat (2021) part of the study revealed opportunities and challenges as perceived by the students. This element in Daniel-Sa'ar and Holtzblatt's study, along with Lytle and Cochran-Smith's main assertion about teacher research, is the basis of this paper.

Engaging and Active Learning—EAL (Parallels to Project-Based Learning)

EAL represents a distribution of authority and of responsibility. Projects replace frontal classroom teaching, and are mainly about multi-disciplinary learning. In PBL, doing is the heart and focus of learning. Thus, the learner, with the help of the mentor, defines the required knowledge to be obtained. This (Knoll, 1997) needs to be emphasized, to prevent depicting PBL as a short-term trend. Smith (2009) states that educators who apply PBL share practices and resources through communication tools. He points out that when projects continue over time, characteristics of knowledge communities begin to emerge, in which shared contents create artifacts. Smith claims that the project's philosophy facilitates engaging, active social learning. Compared to the traditional format, active project-based learning creates learners who are motivated from within, understand and know how to learn. Smith summarizes by saying that the limits of academic knowledge that may be integrated in such learning are determined by the creativity and motivation of the teachers. The term "learner's ownership of learning" is defined by Enghag (2006) as actions of choice and control designated for identifying the learner's opportunities to assume responsibility for his work's management and content. Group ownership of learning relates to the choice and the control measures used by the group in managing its assignment: how it is defined, carried out, and reported. Enghag uses the term "learners' community of practice".

Communities of Practice, Belonging, Participating, and Learning

Lave and Wenger (1991) characterized communities where situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation prevail. They coined and defined the term "community of practice", which is a social grouping of

reflective professionals who work to realize a common vision and objective through shared and cooperative learning. In such a community, people share a commitment to certain actions, share repertory resources, and have (or acquire together) a common language, regularities, artifacts, objects, and "tales of bravery". Geertz (1973) claims that humans are creatures that exist in the webs of meaning they have weaved. These webs, arising from a social context, define the term culture. Thus, it correlates with a person's gradual development according to Lave and Wenger's "community of practice", in a shift from peripheral to full participation along the strands of meaning they themselves weave through situated learning. Learning is a social phenomenon that occurs during reinforced and legitimate participation in the curriculum of the background community. The research group thus forms and grows into a cohesive learning group with the characteristics of a community of practice.

Features and Characteristics of AEL

Mission

Ayas and Zeniuk (2001) interpret mission as a sense of purpose and meaning: actions taken to develop a new vivid outcome (in our case, independent pedagogical initiatives or actions), characterized by a sense of purpose and persistency. The participants are required to create something of value and are faced with the task of integrating uniqueness, passion, and grit. Hughes and Manuel (2006) found that:

> Three interdependent factors predominate here: intrinsic motivations bound up with a sense of the inner life, the self and the quest for fulfilment and purpose; a desire to sustain an engagement with their chosen subject(s); and the opportunity to work with young people as part of the broader social project of education. (Hughes & Manuel, 2006, p. 10)

In the current research we identified a clear orientation towards impacting change in the lives of young children and creating opportunities for their growth and learning. The pedagogical mentors and (all female) students in the study group shared and mutually projected a mission for educational renewal, whilst still dealing with skepticism and an occasional tendency to adhere to a conservative and fixating reality.

Identity

Identity is a person's or an organization's depiction of themselves through choice and self-fulfillment, shaped by conflict between their self-perception and the way society perceives them. In order to maintain educational innovation, the community, as a learning and innovation-promoting organization, must maintain an oriented and self-conscious identity (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006). However, a common oriented identity is not necessarily adopted by all, and some members remain alienated to this identity. Lack of identification with shared uniqueness leads to lack of collaboration and association with shared practices and learning, and ultimately to withdrawal. Innovative, inquisitorial community actions create shared identity, alongside trust, and interdependence (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Shared identity that preserves the individual's uniqueness is the result of shared learning in a community of practice, thus engaging all individuals in partnership and full membership. Learning community members acquire and shape their identity through a variety of roles and in a comprehensive and inclusive context. Identity generates learning through a process of forming and managing knowledge. The identity of the research group as a whole and that of sub groups and individuals in it, reflects a conflict between involvement, daring, and innovation on the one hand, and concern, worry, and limited faith in personal competence on the other.

Partnership

Partnership or, as Arthur and DeFillippi (2002) call it, camaraderie, is a familial social field powered by collective energy. Camaraderie and a sense of togetherness are essential components created by a build-up of

knowledge and a common repertoire in the community's field of practice, which facilitates trust and confidence. This in turn reinforces the mutual "know why", i.e. the common mission and practices. This shared social drive is typical to communities of practice studied by Zeniuk and Ayas (2001). According to D. W. Johnson and R. T. Johnson (2009), a positive connection of action between people may yield promotive interaction, referred to here as "strong partnership", which occurs when individuals encourage and adopt mutual efforts to comprehend and fulfill the group's goals. According to D. W. Johnson and R. T. Johnson (2009), this interaction is based on 10 attributes: trust and reliability, mutual exchange of knowledge resources, availability of effective and contributive help, motivation to achieve shared rewards, encouraging efforts to realize common goals, mutual impact, stress relieving balance, mutual feedback to improve performance, mutual evaluation, and multiple perspectives. The research group did indeed become vigorous during the academic year, defined its common goal, and created partnerships and camaraderies.

Psychological Safety

The attribute of team and personal psychological safety within a community of practice, amongst the participants and the entire structure, sets the ambience for taking risks, daring, stepping outside boundaries, and participating in the new game, knowing that instead of encountering judgmental responses they will receive enablement and support. Edmondson (1999) considers psychological safety as a key attribute, the absence of which may cause group processes to fail, due to antagonism and lack of attentiveness and inquisitiveness. Edmondson emphasizes the importance of establishing psychological safety and settling conflicts in a constructive manner. Zeniuk and Ayas (2001) see psychological safety as a typical behavioral agent of people in a playroom, where they do not fear failure and need not adopt defensive conduct. P. Hodkinson and H. Hodkinson (2004) reinforce this in their report on the importance of safety and trust in the PBL teachers' community. Personal differences within the research community hereby enabled and designed safety anchors and social reinforcements.

Inquisitiveness

In the introduction to Karnieli (2010), Na'ama Zabar Ben Yehoshua claims that education must free and reinforce critique abilities, instill knowledge, and develop self-examination, curiosity and thought flexibility, along with senses of human empathy and moral choices. In this spirit, inquisitiveness is highly emphasized by many researchers in the context of organizational learning and knowledge in general, and in the context of PBL in particular. Ayas and Zeniuk (2001), suggest that leaders should encourage people to be inquisitive and emphasize that it is small groups that generate inquisitive learning. Cambourne, Kiggins, and Ferry (2003) directly refer to the teacher as an initiating researcher in the classroom and refer to constructionism with cyclically examining meaningful learning—building, taking apart, rebuilding.

Reflection

Schön (1987) refers to a process whereby a person, a group, or an organization engages in on-going reactive thinking, during or after their action. According to Korthagen & Vasalo (2005), reflection is a key trait in teachers' professional development, and derivative terms such as reflective dialogue and reflective person of action represent an entire view of learning in schools and in organizations. Incorporating reflection in shared processes helps to turn covert into overt knowledge. Reflection occurs in a personal examination process or in a case analysis, where significant and relevant details are investigated. Reflection serving as a leading and highly appreciated attribute in a learning community may be a key tool in creating assessment structures among

colleagues, ultimately becoming a personal trait and part of teachers' language. Reflecting on their performance will help teachers alleviate their voiced loneliness in the classroom, since it facilitates sharing when designing an optimal lesson plan.

John Dewey (in Adler, 1991, p. 1) already in 1904 recognized the importance of feedback and reflection for improving educators' performance: "Practical work should be pursued primarily with reference to its action on the professional pupil, making him a thoughtful and alert student of education, rather than helping him getting immediate proficiency." Varsalos and Korthagen (2005) present a five-step reflection model that can be a useful fractal for the study group in this research. They propose a nine-question (doing, thinking, and feeling) array to support and direct the teacher's reflection. This model was implemented by the research participants on their own, as well as a community, reflecting themselves as well as their students.

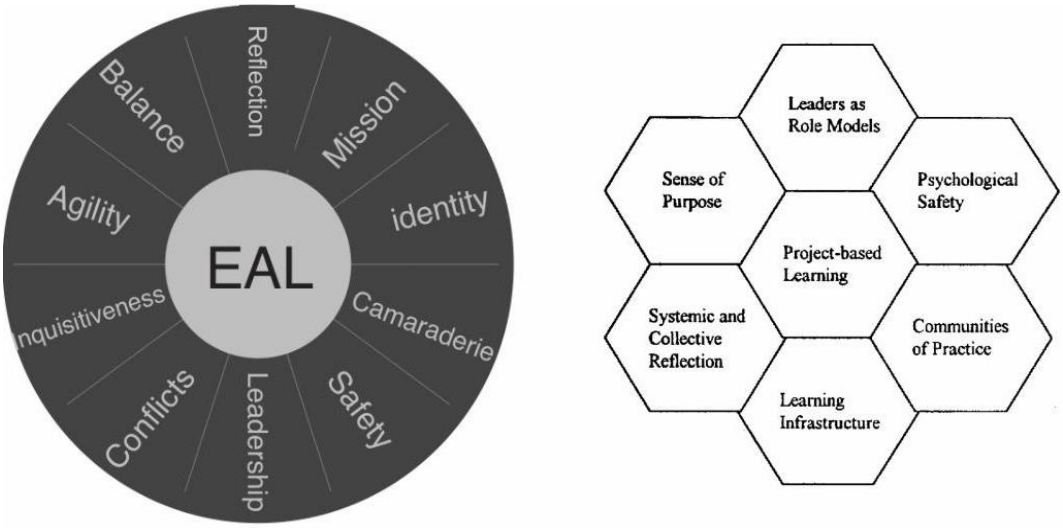

Figure 1. Community's attributes of PBL (Ayas & Zeniuk, 2001) and of EAL (Liraz, 2014).

Research Methodology

We chose to examine the study group using an ethnographic approach. According to Geertz (1973), culture is a set of concepts, views, symbols, and rituals, where human activity assumes meaning to which people relate themselves. Douglas (2002) presents the advantages of the ethnographic model for the study of organizational learning, given that the researcher is involved (within the organization) in analytic relations, which facilitates a rich and profound understanding of the phenomena. Dushnik (2011) recommends that qualitative-interpretive research should celebrate subjectivity, play, and freedom of creation in the analysis process: he suggests that the researcher creates a "version of reality" that represents their own view on reality generated by encounters with subjects. Data analysis in qualitative research is characterized as an analytic process, usually not at all statistical, with intuitive elements or features, aimed at ascribing meaning and interpretation to the studied phenomenon. Accordingly, the method of this research was to sort the basic data into discrete units that represent events or specific references and repeated coding based on categories. As Maykut & Morehouse (1994) note: "Words are the way that most people come to understand their situations. We create our world with words. We explain ourselves with words. We defend and hide ourselves with words" (p. 18).

Our mapping engaged in a process of locating small discrete units/pieces of information, which were parts of projects, conversations, observations, research diaries, and class meetings, as well as passages retrieved from documents.

Presentation of the Research Group and Scene

This research entailed the close accompaniment of a group of 46 participants: two mentors and 44 students. The group operated over one year in two AP classes. 25 students were in the Rahat class and 19 in the unrecognized village of el-Atrach.

Some data on the students:

- five were from Ramla-Lod, 15 from Rahat, 13 from recognized villages, and 11 from unrecognized villages.
- About a third of the students were married with children, a third were married with no children, and a third were single.
- Almost all of the students were under the age of 24.

The preschools:

- 24 preschools in Rahat: five old and rundown, four in new well-kept facilities, 15 in well-kept but old facilities.
- 16 preschools in two educational clusters in el-Atrash, all in a reasonable state of maintenance, in "oasis in the desert" conditions.

The Mentoring Routine

The participants in each class met during one academic year, once a week for sessions each lasting between three and four hours, and worked in preschools three days a week. Both classes met together twice during the year for joint learning. The academic learning spanned two semesters; each semester, students were required to submit six papers based on assignments planned by the mentor's team throughout the year. The mentors visited each preschool, the students and kindergarten teachers, several times a year, including two critique sessions and learning oriented tours.

The Academic Assignments

Each semester, six assignments were submitted. At the beginning of the year, students were briefed as follows:

> You are taking part in a very special program. The mentoring team designed the framework, but you will determine the contents. As befitting the AP Program, we bring academia into the classroom, and that entails inquisitiveness, strictness and professionalism. As befitting AP, we bring preschool into academia, and that entails enthusiasm, excitement and compassion.

Thus, the aim was to commence an internal transfer from consumers of information to producers of knowledge. Towards the second semester, the language was consolidated and the assignments were integrated in one pedagogical diary. As part of this unification in the second semester, this statement was submitted: "A reflective journal is required in all assignments. In it, you will address the following issues in each assignment"*:*

- Things learned about yourself when working at the preschool.
- Things you felt and experienced, things that were good or that bothered you.
- Things you felt you were missing or lacking or that you would have changed in the assignment.

Subsequently, the research questions were:

- What are the things (narrative) that are developing and reported by participants in the AP community in the Arabic language track at Achva College about themselves, their action, and learning?
- What attributes are demonstrated in this common culture and how are attributes and learning stories reflected in the discourse, in practice, and in the products of the community?

Findings

Quantitated Village of el-Atrach

This questionnaire was given to the students at an early stage of the second semester, thus it does not necessarily represent the perceptions at the end of the year.

Table 1

Student Feedback Distribution

Agree with statement	Mentor is necessary for learning	AP began too early	I prefer independent learning	The class helped me understand	I was strict about the diary	Class members are my partners	Class and experience are inter connected
Rahat class	2.94	3.5	2.88	3.81	4.06	3.5	3.94
Atrash class	2.82	3.24	3.41	4.18	4.06	3.65	3.88
Average	2.88	3.37	3.14	3.99	4.06	3.57	3.91
Gap	0.12	0.25	0.53	0.37	0	0.15	0.06
Gap in %	3%	8%	17%	9%	0%	4%	2%

The consensus about the need for conducting a diary was high and all-encompassing; the consensus about the necessity of a mentor was medium, which contradicts the average preference of independent learning. The high level of consensus about the contribution of AP to the correlation between class and action (in both questions) does not correspond with the level of agreement with the statement about AP being premature (maybe the question was misunderstood). We found no explanation for the relatively high gap in tendency to independent learning between the groups.

Students' Pedagogical Initiatives

One of the students' assignments was to develop and lead an educational initiative. Initiative proposals were assessed according to their validity and their potential impact on preschool, taking the following criteria into consideration:

- Originality and innovation
- Being acquainted with the initiative's theme in other places
- Theoretical foundation
- Ability and commitment of the proposer/s to develop and implement the initiative
- Physical, human, and pedagogical infrastructure for the initiative
- Ethical justification

These educational initiatives were developed at a relatively early stage. Some of the students choose their initiatives according a pre-recognized need, while other searched, inquired, and chose according to personal inclinations. Four fundamental approaches were expressed in their selection, balanced in their scope and frequency in both spaces, which determined the nature of the initiative:

(1) From games to learning—choosing a game that generates learning with joy and motivation, including deliberate choice of traditional or mathematical games.

(2) Senses and creation through artistic expression (incorporating recycling of materials)—plastic art center, storytelling corners, theater and puppet theater, music centers, movement and sports, tradition.

(3) The need for orientation in daily life in the community—the post office, the shop, the street, the computer, the bakery, healthy nutrition, and recycling.

(4) The natural environment—relevant experimentation through a water-learning center and an herb garden—learning about sowing, and the growing of plants.

What motivated the second level initiative?

Alert and aware of her physical and human environment, and driven by her motivation to change and improve, our typical student yearns to fulfill herself, to criticize and take risks and she is ready to join the "new game". She is self-aware and knows how to participate and share. All students undertook initiatives, some in pairs—including the development of partnerships—that stemmed from recognizing possibilities, while others preferred to follow the recommendation of the kindergarten teacher or their mentor. These initiatives demonstrated students' identification of themselves in general and in the preschool class in particular; how they understood their roles and personal agendas and motivations in correcting wrongs or meeting needs:

> … I noticed that in the classroom, there were no math games and math is not dealt with except for writing numbers and quantities; therefore, I decided to integrate these two things that are missing in the preschool and create something new for the children to learn and enjoy... It was clear that the children needed a place where they could release energy and enjoy themselves.
>
> (Raya)

The *typical student* is intrinsically aware, and is not only motivated from the outside, by the need to examine what she wants to accomplish and what the children seek to achieve (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). At the same time, she knows what difficulties to expect, including her own. The initiative is chosen and constructed through self and shared inquisitiveness and examination. To ensure realization and success, the kindergarten pre-teacher needs to be aware of children's abilities and ages, avoiding mistaken assumptions. She did not assume that children "see" situations, problems, or solutions the way adults do.

> I have already started the educational initiative and I can see that what I have expected and written down is already happening. The purpose of this initiative is to help the development of the child in every aspect, as well as the interactions between the children, their cooperation, mathematical thinking and social growth. I could see all of that when we launched the educational initiative… Unfortunately, the children in this preschool are not accustomed to activities like shows and theater. I experienced great difficulties because the children struggled to express themselves and engage in conversation. ...Kindergarten teachers must be very careful not to assume that children "see" situations, problems or solutions.
>
> (Samia)

These initiatives arise from motivation, dedication, and understanding of this task, which incorporates uniqueness, passion, and pride, the materials that make a vocation. Yet it remains connected to the daily realities and routine in the classroom. Both pre-teacher and children are ready for change and choice, willing to cope, pay attention to needs, and consider ethical values.

> I use different ways every time; music, a film or a story, so the children will not be bored…I test their mathematical level at the beginning and follow it as it improves with games, which also "break the ice" and offer an opportunity to interact without violence… The initiative of geometrical shapes took place outside the classroom; This way, I could arrange a nice, clean, tidy and safe corner for my initiative… you cannot build a music center without the necessary physical infrastructure… I wanted to create a place where they could play the same games their fathers and grandparents had played.
>
> (Zohar)

The initiatives, operated by 44 students in two classes and in 30 preschools, demonstrated inquisitiveness as discussed by Tidd and Bessant (2009), which "comes through people who are passionate enough to pursue and

ideas they believe in" (p. 380). Dewey (in Wagner & Childs, 2000), recommends the nurturing of critical and inquisitive minds—people with a critical and inquisitive way of thinking.

Events Generating Learning or Decisions

Direct learning events, including:

- Investigative report of pedagogy-generating events
- Investigative report on short training activities

Social or personal events, including:

- Investigative report of events
- Investigative report of decisions and resolutions

This miniature case study was an opportunity to mold the future identity of kindergarten teachers. Most of the responses concerned qualities of friendship or partnership, while a few related to inquisitiveness and learning. Sometimes a student felt empathy for children's pain or joy. Sometimes she felt the burden of responsibility she would soon bear as a kindergarten teacher. She is grateful for this opportunity; the students reacted emotionally to joyous or sad events. The joy was generally related to gratitude, love, explicit appreciation; sadness was related to distress, to children's tears, their loneliness, and desolation.

> I looked at the child; he was sad and could not utter a word. This event affected me deeply because I knew I might experience something like this in the future in my kindergarten.
>
> (Rana)

The typical student, whose identity as a kindergarten teacher is currently being formed, recognizes what she is likely to face and cope with as a teacher in her own preschool class.

> I have learned a lot from this event and I feel that in the future I would want to meet the parents and have them tell me what their children like so they too would feel the responsibility.
>
> (Sara)

The typical student sees debates between the teacher and her assistant and worries that she, too, might experience this. She is worried about parents who are late to pick up their children; a child orphaned of her mother is teased and that makes her sad; she is worried about children running away; a child stealing from his friend, children who have no friends; she is worried about neglect, dirt, and physical distress.

> So I asked him about his demeanor and what made him sad. He told me that all of his friends refuse to play with him. I used the morning session to discuss this issue, talking about friendship and how all the children in the class are friends.
>
> (Alia)

In many cases, the typical student cannot change the reality in the class despite her emotional involvement and touch. Yet, sometimes, through an initiative that promotes a different distribution of resources, she actually helps.

The typical student welcomes the opportunity to teach when she sees a child looking sadly at a wilted red flower, because now she can relate to his feelings when she talks to him about the process of blooming and wilting. Learning-generating events are easy to respond to. The pre-teacher listens to the children's ponderings and enlists moral laws, urging them not to hurt animals. She is happy to respond, to initiate and to propose an experiment and is proud of the children when they have a "scientific" debate about which is better for a certain purpose; dry sand or wet sand, and manage to find a compromise…

> One of the children said, "we want to build a mountain". Another replied, "we can build it with wet sand and draw with dry sand and we will create a great product from wet and dry sand."
>
> (Siham)

In the course of learning in the tutor class, there were signs of emerging camaraderie and a willingness to learn from one another, alongside competition, problem solving and coping with technical or organizational faults, and the mentor's pride in them. However, one of the AP students expressed disappointment at what she perceived as a lack of appreciation and was worried about the mentor's flexibility and ability to change the day's plan.

> All the students said they did not want that activity nor did they want to write an observation. The student who chose the activity said she was really keen on it, but since the other students objected to it, the mentor suggested she change her plan.
>
> (Rada)

The typical student is insightful to children, to herself, and to her colleagues; she wants to reach out and help. She needs acknowledgement, she wants her friends' patience, the teacher's empathic response, and the appreciation of the children and the mentor, realizing that this would be expected from her soon. A sense of partnership and "promoting interaction" (D. W. Johnson & R. T. Johnson, 2009) can serve the common goal, which is to know what it is like to be a teacher in a preschool class; "knowing why" creates a sense of shared vocation. Between future kindergarten teacher and a present student worried about reports and grades, the student's identity is molded by academia and kindergarten.

> I didn't think I would get to the point where I am proud of myself and of my work. I hope that all of my efforts will result in a good grade, which would elevate me and make me prouder and prouder.
>
> (Safa)

Reflection, Inquiry, and Inquisitiveness

The terms "reflective dialogue" and "reflective person of action" refer to a process whereby a person, a group, or an organization, is engaged in reactive, on-going reflective thinking during (in), and after (on) their action. Based on Schön's (1987) "reflective practitioner", we use the phrase "an intern student reflectively practices to become a preschool teacher", describing what a student does in her practical internship, practicing and reflectively examining her level of readiness.

- The student who gains experience in her practical internship is the *practitioner*.
- Reflectively practicing—that is the *reflective* part.

Despite widespread doubt among students regarding the "assessment recompense" for their engagement and input in the process, which for many is still largely related to the college's grading assessment model, we found that all of them discovered true value and satisfaction in the (difficult and sometimes burdensome) process of self-examination of their knowledge, learning, and ability to become kindergarten teachers in the future and exhaust learning in the present during their AC year. They recognized and were able to report their need for high self-orientation and self-consciousness, hidden layers discovered in children as a result of the kindergarten teacher's thinking and awareness of her actions and of theirs. They asked themselves if the action was within their capabilities, if it was performed correctly, and were surprised to discover some capabilities they did not know they possessed; they were surprised at the identification and expression of their own strengths and weaknesses.

The following summation is representative of references to the complex identity of both students and practicing kindergarten teacher:

> I started my assignments at the beginning of the semester to avoid the stress later, and I listened to—and valued—everything that was said in class, which helped me achieve what I aspired to. I could see improvement in my grades. The other good thing is that after Academia-Gan, I understand the importance of reflection and of writing everything that takes place in my class. This improved my studying and helped me learn more.
>
> (Suzan)

The students' inquisitiveness was demonstrated in their constant search for the right response to events; striving to turn in-action reflection into a resource, a useful tool that improves with daily practice. One of the students called it "inquiry sprouts":

> Having been exposed to all processes and events, I learned how to describe a situation as well as sprouts of inquiry. At first, I wasn't aware of them, but the work we have done made me learn it the right way.
>
> (Dalia)

This "sprouting" brought on the discovery and understanding that self-inquisitiveness requires attention, alertness, and acknowledgement. This is a skill which yields a sequence of observation-recognition-understanding-decision-action-examination. This is the beginning of the reflective process as taught by Korthagen and Vasalos (2005). At the end of the year, without having criteria to direct the student, the feeling was somewhat euphoric.

> The work is not easy, requires effort, but at the end I did it and everything is alright. I learned a lot; I have learned how to plan and carry out an activity that has not been planned for me and I have learned about myself in event study. I learned that there was nothing I couldn't do, nothing too hard that would stand in my way with the children.
>
> (Aysha)

Cuban (1990) points out: "Citing exemplars of choice where schooling has improved is useful, but as incomplete as showing Chartres Cathedral to a novice architect and saying: "Here is what can be done." (p. 4). The AP process made it achievable.

Discussion

The sense of psychological and personal safety of community members and their trust in their partners and in the program as a whole is what allows them to take risks, to dare, to venture beyond reality's limits, and to join the "new game", in the knowledge that instead of judgemental reactions they will encounter a supportive and enabling system. The developing identity of students at the Achva College's AP Program can be seen in the growing self-confidence in their own ability to fulfill their duty and become professionals, who reflect on their actions and thinking processes. This safe zone of action and thinking was made possible by personal and joint accumulation of learning and practice tools, not acquired in a lecture hall or through theoretical/academic work, but in the field and through practical experience. These tools are observation, understanding the interaction, play, initiated learning of the moment, and the ability to respond to incidental events with understanding. That is where all these tools have been learned and used. Lave and Wagner (1991) show the model of action (practices or artifacts) repertoire accumulating in the community toolbox, calling it "the technology of the community" (p. 182). This toolbox was demonstrated by community leaders, the mentors, and implemented and improved by students. Gaining confidence in using this toolbox helped each of them along their individual course (both inner

and communal) and enabled them to reach a confident and safe place in the active community, as well as gaining its other value—evaluation and grades. The gap between the academic learning arena, represented by the college, assignments, and the papers, and practical/experimental/arena was demanding and burdensome at times, but did not cause severe conflicts or crises. On the contrary, this gap was meant to facilitate, and did indeed do so. A second chance was given to some of the students after an unsuccessful first semester. This is how experience is gained.

Greetz (1973) suggested that people live in webs of meaning of their own weaving. Studied in the AP community, these webs were first spun by the mentors, then were spun on by serial repetitions, careful application, trust, second and third experimenting. Cooperation (intentional in group meetings and natural in casual encounters) intensified and deepened the strands of these webs, enhancing social cohesion and the initial sense of camaraderie (DeFillippi & Arthur, 2002), which was the birth place of stories and narratives.

A story and a narrative are natural terms of qualitative research of communities in general and communities of practice in particular. A story is something that occurred in reality, and a narrative is the interpretive coating provided by its tellers. Stories (i.e., detailed miniature reports) told in the community report on various events: an assistant scolded, a smiling child, difficulty to understand and cope with time pressure. The accumulated narratives wove the character of the future kindergarten teacher as seen through her own eyes, the way she perceived her work load, her sensitivity to children, her creativity and her enhanced ability to respond to events. Trahar (2009) offers a narrative study based on the premise that as humans we understand the meaning of things in our lives through the way we tell them: "Narrative inquiry is based firmly in the premise that, as human beings, we come to understand and give meaning to our lives through story" (p. 2). The narratives of the AP community are characterized by two sets of conflicting traits (Figure 2), balancing each other. This is where the community comes in; psychological safety stems from being willing to talk about the difficulties along with the successes. The community of reflective intern students is built on a repertoire of "stories of heroism", which, in turn, tightens the web of significance.

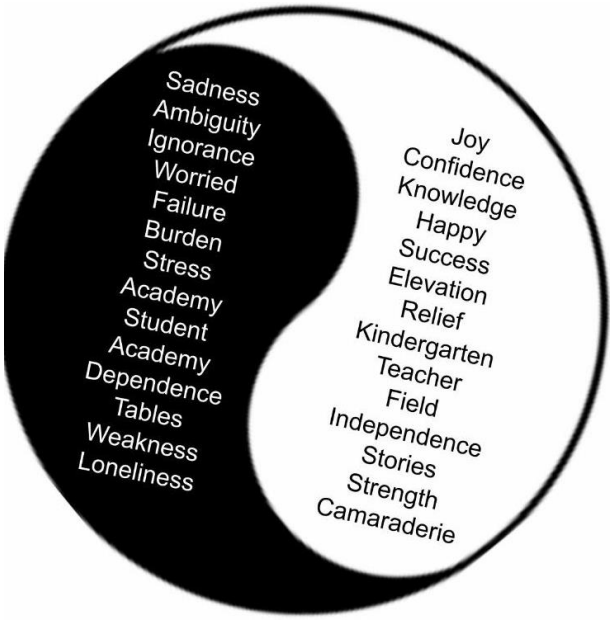

Figure 2. Distribution of feedback.

Insights

This study, dealing with the emergence of a community of practice, described the processes of work and reflection of a single AP group, a distinct and particular case in Bedouin society, in two preschool clusters. We did not presume to explain phenomena, processes, states of mind, or outcomes; rather, we presented the story of a group in the making, showing landmarks by which to learn it and realize its activity. As appropriate in ethnographic research, we did not investigate the community, we learned about it from the inside, depicting it from within, getting feedback and reflection in the process. We intend to continue to do research on the AP and AC communities and to study other links between academia and the field. Giles and Hargreaves (2006) talk about the sustainability of innovative schools and the conflict they represent. Preserving and sustaining innovation in AP requires examination of innovative courses of action and research.

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