Case Studies to Deepen Understanding and Enhance Classroom Management Skills in Preschool Teacher Training

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Abstract This article adds to the existing body of data that demonstrates how the use of in-depth case studies that include social episode analysis can deepen the teaching students' and researchers' understanding of the perceptions and skills needed for Classroom Management (CM). In this article, CM is defined as a meta-skill that integrates cognitive perceptions (proactive, ecological-systemic, and leadership-oriented), self-regulation skills, and interpersonal relationships with students and colleagues. CM is also perceived as a cyclical process that includes advance planning, implementation, assessment during the implementation, and a final evaluation that takes into account factors related to the children and their environment, intended to bring about progress in the activities carried out for the learning and emotional well-being of the children in the class. Two cases showing opposite positions with regard to social-moral CM were selected from 34 cases documented by second-year, 4-year-track, preservice teaching students enrolled in a CM course in Israel in the spring of 2008. One case shows how, guided by the desire to ensure a child's well-being, a student developed perceptions and skills related to all components of the CM theoretical framework. The other case shows how opportunities were missed to learn and develop a social-moral, complex, CM perception. Based on an analysis of the two cases, the discussion examines the usefulness of case studies in teacher training and offers insights related to improved teacher training.

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Introduction

Kindergarten classrooms are complex living and learning environments, characterized by simultaneity, immediacy, unpredictability, publicness, and history (Doyle 1986, 2006). They are inhabited in our modern world by children and staff who are diverse in terms of their individual dispositions and preferences as well as their cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (Barth 2002; Sergiovanni 2001, 2007; Evertson and Weinstein 2006). The teacher's task is to lead the kindergarten classroom, taking into account both the children's diversity and the nature of the group life, so that each child feels secure, has a sense of belonging, and has a fair chance to learn. This job of leading and orchestrating in an aligned manner, coordinating everyone's needs, is referred to in this article as classroom management (CM).

In spite of its importance and complexity, CM seems to suffer from quite a bad reputation among scholars, and is also not given enough focused attention in teacher training (Emmer and Stough 2001; Evertson and Weinstein 2006). Indeed CM is frequently perceived by the teachers themselves as a list of recommendations and tricks (Landau 2009) that can "fix" any difficulty that comes up in the intense life of classrooms. Quite often, teaching students as well as veteran teachers wish to learn ready-made solutions to fit every difficulty raised by a child's misbehavior, anxieties, conflict with other children, or learning difficulty. But one size does not fit all in education, and ready-made solutions often are ineffective. Barth (1980)

thoughtfully noticed that the problems of educators worldwide are quite similar, while the solutions tend to be unique to each case. The expected lack of success in applying ready-made solutions leads teachers and teaching students to the conclusion that the children themselves, and quite often their parents, are to be blamed for the failure, and that difficulties are incurable.

To lead classrooms, teachers need conceptual tools to help clarify how kindergarten classrooms work, create a commitment to the welfare and learning of the children, and develop skills to apply these insights and commitment. Hence, the complexity of classes requires dedication, intricate planning combined with ingenuity, and an array of skills. The complexity of the perceptions and skills involved in CM requires that the training process link well-established theoretical concepts with a deep and systematic understanding of field experience. These links must be two-directional: On the one hand, the theoretical ideas and concepts that are part of academic training are intended to guide an understanding of life and learning in kindergartens, and performance in the field; no less important, however, attention must be given in teacher-training schools to an analysis of real events in the field that enrich, modify, and validate the theories. This sort of reasoning led Flyvbjerg (2006) and Stake (1995) to encourage professional trainers in the realm of social studies to employ case studies as an integral part of the professional preparation of students:

> In a teaching situation, well-chosen case studies can help the student achieve competence, whereas context-independent facts and rules will bring the student just to the beginner's level. Case studies often contain a substantial element of narrative. Good narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life (Flyvbjerg 2006, p. 222).

Against this background, we decided to employ case studies in a systematic and intensive way in a course focused on CM intended for either second or third year students in the Early Development Department of Levinsky College of Education.

Theoretical Framework

The definition and role of case studies are succinctly presented in the online writing guide of Colorado State University:

> Case studies typically examine the interplay of all variables in order to provide as complete an understanding of an event or situation as possible. This type of comprehensive understanding is arrived at through a process known as thick description, which involves an in-depth description of the entity being

evaluated, the circumstances under which it is used, the characteristics of the people involved in it, and the nature of the community in which it is located. Thick description also involves interpreting the meaning of demographic and descriptive data such as cultural norms and mores, community values, ingrained attitudes, and motive (Writing@CSU, n.d.).

In addition, the use of case studies in teacher training is motivated by an active perception of the teacher and child. In the process of documenting episodes and reflecting on them, the teaching students become active participants in their own learning. What we employed in the CM course is what Giddings, a sociologist who worked in the early 1900s, called a case study as a basis of case work. Generally speaking, case studies enable us to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon and formulate a problem or issue that needs to be addressed in order to improve overall functioning in the particular practice that is examined. As Giddings (1924) points out, "The 'case' must be diagnosed and understood before it can be effectively handled and bettered. This preliminary enterprise is case study."

Indeed case studies have been used extensively in the pre-service training of teachers and other helping professions as tools that promote a reflective practice (see, for example, Lee and Choi 2008; Scarpaci 2006; Kagan 1992). The importance of the present study stems from the employment of case studies in conjunction with a particular theoretical conceptualization of moral CM. The two cases presented in this article were selected to emphasize the deep and real meaning of setting moral practice as a genuine goal of classroom management.

Definitions of CM

We define CM as the ability of the teacher to lead the class—both children and staff—toward achieving the socio-emotional welfare and learning of the students. Embedded in the definition is a moral orientation—the pursuit of well-being and learning opportunities for every child. Furthermore CM is perceived as a cyclical process that includes advance planning, implementation, assessment during the implementation, and a final evaluation that takes into account factors related to the children and their environment, intended to bring about progress in the activities carried out for the emotional well-being and learning of the children in the class.

In addition to the conventional measures of classroom management (involvement of all the children in learning, on-task behavior, and cooperating with the rules), we propose a dynamic measure of effective CM—an operational definition that includes the ability to modify

classroom activities in the wake of difficulties in order to facilitate the children's learning and well-being.

The theoretical framework presented in this article that is taught in the CM course identifies and defines the perceptions, competencies, and skills needed by teachers in the process of leading and managing kindergarten classrooms. The suggested framework was developed by the author (Tal 2008, in press) on the basis of existing literature and numerous observations of a range of kindergarten classrooms, as well as the examination of dozens of case studies reported primarily by teaching students and some veteran teachers. The framework was tested and refined through teaching several classes using case study methodology and conveying the model to the students.

CM Calls for a Complex Social-Moral Curriculum

Leading the classroom proactively while remaining alert to various people, behaviors, and other factors necessitates thoughtful and complex planning. In the theoretical framework proposed in this article, teachers' planning is oriented towards creating conditions that enhance the children's sense of well-being, belonging, and meaningful learning. This complex plan is referred to in this article as a "social-moral curriculum", a term also used by Evertson and Weinstein (2006). A complex program generally includes several chains of processes and several chains of interim results. All these chains are geared toward attaining one or several goals that must exist in harmony and full coordination (Friedman 2010).

The planning of a social-moral curriculum involves cognitive perceptions and skills. We submit that CM necessitates proactive and ecological perceptions of life in the classroom as well as leadership. It also requires several skills and competencies: good interpersonal relations with children, their parents, and staff; and the ability to constantly and reflectively manage or regulate oneself. In what follows, we succinctly define each of the components in the theoretical framework and explain how it is related to CM. For more details about each component and the framework, see Tal (2008, in press).

Proactive Perception

The teacher must develop a deliberate-proactive form of thinking that will accustom her to anticipate possible scenarios based on knowing the class dynamics and the characteristics of individual students, as well as alternative coping mechanisms. A proactive perception is distinguished from a reactive perception in which teachers respond to events without prior consideration of possible courses of action and pitfalls. For example, a teacher who acts proactively considers in advance the possible

disruptive behavior of specific children and prepares a lesson in a way that enables their participation with minimum disturbance to the other children. Kounin (1970) found that the difference between effective and ineffective classroom management consists in the teacher's ability to prevent disturbances and disciplinary problems, rather than to cope with them after they arise.

Ecological-Systemic Perception

This asserts that the functioning and development of the child, and all human beings in general, are influenced by contextual factors that include relations between the child and those around him, and relations among those around him to each other (Bronfenbrenner 1979). In other words, this is the understanding among teachers that the direct relationship between the teacher and the child, relationships among the children themselves, and those between parents of the children and staff members (in addition to factors related to the physical environment, time management, etc.) impact the functioning of each child and CM in general. It is important to note that our definition of the ecological-systemic perception refers to the teacher's "mental set"—regularly asking herself what social and physical factors might be affecting a specific event involving a group or an individual child, staff member, or parent. This means wholeheartedly believing that an individual's functioning is affected by the context; that behaviors—desirable and problematic—must be understood from the perspective of the individual's relations with the environment; and that coping strategies must therefore be derived from this context. The implication is that effectively addressing the difficulties of individuals must often include changes in the context—such as the student–teacher relationship, the attitudes of other students or the teacher, the physical features of the classroom, etc.—as well as possible behavioral changes in the child.

A Management-Leadership Perception

This, of course, is also linked to the other perceptions and refers to the mental set of the teacher, as it is she who leads and manages the classroom, children, and staff toward the goals defined by her, generally together with other people. The management-leadership aspect of CM is crucial because it includes the need to define clear goals, maintain awareness of these goals, and also understand that the teacher is responsible for motivating others to work toward the common goals. The proposition that good teachers need to perceive themselves and be perceived as leaders is compatible with Barth's assertion, "I would like to put forward the revolutionary idea that all teachers can lead. If schools are going to become places where all children and

adults are learning in worthy ways, all teachers *must* lead" (2002, p. 85).

CM Requires Self-Regulation and Interpersonal Skills

Scholars have referred to the process of self-regulation by various terms—self-management, self-control, problem solving, control over behavior, control over one's affect, etc.—and attributed meanings to it that are not always identical (Pintrich 2000). Self-regulation, according to Bandura (1991), is the process of forethought through which people motivate themselves and guide their actions in an anticipatory, proactive way.

In the present context, we define self-regulation in accord with Bandura's (1991, 1997) theoretical perspective as the teacher's ability: to plan based on information about the children and context, to formulate steps to reach her goals, to be self-critical during implementation of the program while in control of her feelings and behavior, to introduce changes and modifications as needed based on her assessments, and to repeat the cycle from the beginning. The definition of self-regulation used in this study resembles definitions of reflective practice that are widely employed in education (see, for example Schon 1983; Jasper 2003).

In recent years, awareness seems to be growing about the importance of having quality interpersonal relations both with and among the children for attainment of school goals—emotional well-being as well as significant learning and high scholastic achievement (Sidorkin 2002; Evertson and Weinstein 2006; Pianta 1999). Although relations with and among the children are considered a crucial component of effective CM, few scholars give thought to the contradiction between the pressure to show school "effectiveness" as measured by scholastic achievements (especially international comparisons) and the deep and sincere handling of relations within the school. One exception is the critical writing of Sidorkin, who confronts the educational system with this contradiction. While in the 1970s and 1980s great emphasis was placed on behavioral systems as key tools in CM (for example, Kazdin 1982), the conclusion of scholars today (such as Evertson and Weinstein 2006; and Pianta 1999) is that more emphasis should be placed on respectful relations between teachers and children as part of the effort to motivate study and foster cooperative behavior in the classroom.

Method

Two cases were selected from a pool of 34 cases documented by second-year, preservice teaching students (in a 4-year program) in a CM course taught by the author in the

spring of 2008 in Israel. The students took part in a preparation program for both regular and special education kindergarten teachers. The students' assignment for this course, which served as the database for the present study, included the following:

- The students had to keep a journal throughout the semester documenting CM-related events in their field placement.
- They were asked to choose a social episode, interpret and analyze it in terms of the CM perceptions and skills employed, as well as the overall effectiveness of their coping strategies. In addition, they were asked to think of an issue or problem raised by their actions that could improve their handling of similar episodes in the future.
- Following analysis of the first episode, they were asked to report on a second episode that demonstrated improved coping with the issue in similar circumstances.
- Finally, they were asked to compare the two events and draw conclusions.

The social episode was chosen as the basic unit of interpretation and analysis as it represents a natural division of social life (Harré and Secord 1972).

All 34 cases documented by the students who participated in the CM course were thoroughly examined by the author. Irit's case was chosen as one that demonstrates learning and development of all the competencies included in the model from her report of event 1 to her report of event 2. Thus, the second event reported by Irit could be considered a prototypical or paradigmatic case (Flyvbjerg 2006) of the theoretical framework presented in this study. Roxana's case was chosen as it is one of the few that showed how opportunities to learn and develop a complex social-moral CM perception seem to have been missed. It is presented here to assist us in drawing conclusions about teacher training practices that could guide us in the future.

Results—Analysis of the Two Case Studies

Irit's Case: Social Episode #1, 8 May 2008

This took place in a kindergarten for six children with cerebral palsy (CP), three of whom were capable of speaking. The non-speaking children used symbol and audio-vocal devices to assist in communicating. In the reported episode, the student Irit led a circle learning-session in which all six children participated, and the teacher-mentor observed.

Description of Episode #1

Irit began the session as usual with a song asking "Who came to school today?" As she was talking with the children, the teacher updated her that since the beginning of the week, she had been adding a new ritual to the morning in which she asked each child what he or she had done the afternoon before. The teacher told Irit that the children using the audio-vocal devices came to school with recordings prepared by their parents reporting their activities of the previous afternoon. The children had to push the button when it was their turn so they could participate by having everyone listen to the parents' recorded report. The teacher asked Irit to introduce the new ritual in her talk with the children. When Irit turned to L., the last child to be asked about her afternoon activities, the girl pushed the button, and a recorded report of her activities that afternoon was heard. Irit then proceeded to teach what she had planned, but L. began to push the button again and again, causing the recorded statement of her mother to be heard several times in a row. Irit approached L., held her gaze, and asked her to stop as this interfered with everyone's learning. L. did not stop, so Irit took L.'s device away from her.

Right after the incident, the mentor-teacher told Irit that she should not have taken away L.'s device as it serves as the child's "mouth", and one should deal with such behavior as with the interference of children capable of speech.

Irit's full reflection and evaluation of the episode:

This is the first time I performed the new ritual and, until then, the devices were distributed to the children only at the beginning of the questions stage. Also the rules dealing with the use of the audio-vocal device [in the classroom] are unclear. Staff members use the device according to their understanding of the rules. In any case, I definitely noticed staff giving the audio device to the children and then taking it away from them.

Also, this was the first time that a mother's voice was recorded, as in previous sessions, it was the voices of the staff. *I think the fact that L. heard her mother's voice during the lesson influenced her behavior in the situation.* (Irit's final assignment handed in late June, 2008; emphasis added by C.T.).

Towards the end of this section, Irit starts to draw conclusions that reflect an attempt to understand the situation. She hypothesizes that L. might have used the device in an untimely way because she wanted to hear her mother's voice. We witness here an attempt to understand the situation in an ecological-systemic manner.

Irit continues her reflection:

When the incident happened *I reacted* without thinking, and took the device away immediately *as I wanted to "save" the lesson* and be able to continue the dialogue with the other children without hearing the recording again and again. That is, I felt the need to act promptly, without delay—*however in retrospect* [*it seems that*] *the solution I chose was wrong.* When I talked with the teacher after the session, and she explained the rationale behind her request, *I understood her request and felt guilty* about my reaction. The device indeed functions as L.'s mouth. It is used by her for communication and therefore it shouldn't be taken away from her. *One should think of alternative ways to cope with similar situations,* without *me* taking it away from her (emphasis added by C.T.).

In this section, Irit takes responsibility for her own acts and identifies her decision as a mistake. She attempts to understand the situation; she expresses constructive criticism about her own actions. She also acknowledges that the mentor-teacher's admonition and explanation touched her emotionally and led to an understanding of why her actions were inappropriate. This leads her to a commitment to find alternatives to dealing with children's disruptions that do not involve robbing them of "their mouth". In this section we witness the beginning of a self-regulation cycle motivated by both ecological understanding, proactive thinking that replaces a reactive reaction, and what seems to become a leadership perception.

In the next section, Irit places her reflection back in the context of the ecology of the class and reaches generalizations:

My reaction could have been prevented if *the teacher had been proactive* and informed me about the new ritual sufficiently before the session so that I could have prepared myself.
We can learn from this that proactive functioning of the teacher influences the functioning of all her staff. If the teacher acts proactively and thinks ahead of time of possible scenarios, she can also assist her staff to act proactively.
In spite of everything that was said, I consider the new ritual to be beneficial and it expresses the teacher's ecological view and is adopted for the children's wellbeing and for the sake of furthering communication and relationships among the children (emphasis added by C.T.).

In this last section of her reflection, Irit looks at the situation ecologically from the larger perspective of the class. She is able to simultaneously understand all the participants' perspectives: the teacher's and her own, the

children's and the staff's. She reaches a generalization that is useful for her as a teacher-to-be. She understands both the meaning of the components of the theoretical framework and the fact that these perceptions and skills are interdependent. It is interesting to see how an integrated understanding of CM is being developed by the student. She seems to be aware and ready to appropriate social-moral goals in dealing with children's disruptions.

Finally, Irit moves from self-developed generalizations to self-generated planned actions to be undertaken, which are focused and specific:

> Paying attention to L. before and during the learning session could help prevent the [previously] described situation: Initiating more frequent communication with her and letting her feel like a participant. I should notice that in the usual circle arrangement, L. sits at the end of the row. When I finished writing up the event, I noticed that during circle discussions I usually approach L. last due to the seating arrangement…Maybe if I change that, it will help and that situation will not happen again.
>
> I will also make more frequent use of the audio device…Maybe a more active use of communication devices will lessen her need and desire to push the button. Next time I will also ask one of the assistants to sit behind L. so that if she needs help, she can get it without me having to interrupt the discussion. I will also lower the volume of the audio device a little…

The planned actions suggested by Irit are well suited to the child and the class context, and reflect both leadership (Irit takes charge of the situation) as well as proactive and ecological insights. Her plan of action—implementation of socio-moral planning—considers several actions to be taken by educators and does not put a heavy burden to change on the child's shoulders. We see that Irit plans how to create conditions that will help L., not interfere with her. Nevertheless, she also thinks proactively of the possibility that L. will use the device improperly, after all. Therefore, she plans to get help from the assistant for monitoring the girl's behavior.

Irit's Case: Social Episode #2, 6 June 2008

Description of Episode #2

This episode took place 1 week later, also during the morning circle discussion, and involved the same girl. Irit had asked the assistant to sit behind L. and, before the circle began, turned down the volume of the device, talked to L., and read her a book of her choice. Then she began the circle discussion by asking L. questions and having the

children listen to her recording with the voice of her mother describing L.'s pleasurable activities at a local park. She also encouraged communication between L. and other children who happened to spend time at parks in the afternoon. In addition, Irit initiated many exchanges with the girl using the audio device. Irit finishes her report by stating, "During the entire session, L. did not use the audio device improperly. She was attentive and well-behaved and the assistant's help was not needed."

Irit's reflection on the second episode (summary):

> To sum up, I adopted several actions to prevent recurrence of the previous event and I think *the reflection after the first event* and the *will that it not recur*, helped. This time my coping was different because I was prepared in advance for the ritual and thought of possible scenarios and the appropriate action if L. behaved as she had in the past.
> I think my coping with the event *contributed to the girl's wellbeing*, and also my mention of the common play activities at the park in the afternoon by both L. and S. helped initiate *discourse among the children and build a relationship*.
> I also believe that the attention paid to L. helped her feel good so that she did not need to push the button for attention as in the first event.

From Irit's succinct summary of the event, we learn that she attributes her success in coping with a potentially challenging situation in the second episode to both a thorough reflection of the previous episode and her strong will that the event not recur. From her writing we have the impression that Irit sees the child's well-being and her communication with other children as goals of her teaching and as CM goals that guided her selection of planned actions and their implementation. She seems to be well aware that success in dealing with challenging events requires preparation (e.g., attention paid to the girl prior to the circle discussion, thinking ahead of alternatives, and reflecting on one's practice). Irit also exercises leadership from the moment she takes responsibility for her mistake immediately after the first episode. The second episode and reflection complete a cycle of self-regulation. This cycle seems to have been initiated by Irit, who had been discontent with her own actions following her mentor's admonition and explanation. Thus, the change in her attitude toward the girl's disruption was motivated by an imbalance. She felt guilty and involved herself in a full cycle of self-regulation that led to a thoughtful correction of her own actions as well as a few generalizations mentioned earlier. At the end of the reported event, she reaches emotional balance and the cycle of self-regulation comes to an end.

Roxana's Case: Social Episode #1, 8 May 2008

This takes place in a special-education, Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) and language-deficit kindergarten class. A total of nine children are in the class. The reported event took place during outdoor play.

Description of Episode #1

Roxana observed that R., a boy described as having Asperger's disorder and also highly disruptive, was playing in the sandbox and started to throw sand on other children. She approached the boy three times and asked him to stop, but he did not. She then offered him two options: to go inside for 5 min and then return; or to stay inside for the rest of the day. The boy refused both. In that case, Roxana told him, he would have to spend the rest of the next day inside and she was going to update the staff about the punishment. The assistant observed and listened to the talk, took R. inside, and told him that he was being punished for not obeying the student. The boy started crying and apologized repeatedly to the student. The teacher approached and told R. that he was being punished for not obeying the student, not because he threw sand.

Roxana's Reflection and Evaluation of the Episode

Roxana wrote, "my coping with the event was not right and I should have been more assertive". However, she added, the boy's cries and apologies made her feel helpless and ponder the correctness of the punishment. This was a critical point that a perceptive mentor could have used to encourage Roxana to ponder the source of her helpless feelings and encourage her to think about possible ways to cope with the situation that would help the boy correct his behavior and allow her to feel good about her authority. Furthermore, her initiative to approach the boy while he was throwing sand, before any child was hurt, was noteworthy, and reflective of proactive thinking. The assistant's and teacher's prompt intervention, which was probably well intended, was meant to reinstate the student's authority in the boy's eyes and strengthen her. However, these actions were not discussed by the staff and their possible impact on the boy and the student was not reflected upon. The teacher's punishment accompanied by the explanation that the boy was being punished for not obeying the student, not because he threw sand on other children, is problematic from a moral perspective. The standard put forth by the mentor and gladly accepted by the student is that obedience of an authority figure is more important than hurting other children; that is, she set a low moral standard for both the boy and the student. As a result, the student felt good about the teacher's intervention and

stopped thinking about ways to improve her method of coping with challenging situations. Roxana wrote:

> After the teacher talked to him and made him understand that the punishment was no longer for throwing sand, but rather for disobeying me, which is very important, and after I saw him relaxed, and after he understood that he deserved the punishment and that the punishment was right—all these made me feel better and [led me to believe] that what I did was not so bad and that everything could have been prevented with more assertiveness on my part.

We witness here hasty closure of an episode that, instead of encouraging more thinking and the pursuit of a complex way of handling similar situations in the future, led the student to feel content about her actions and missed an opportunity for reflection and learning. The lack of thinking about the dual problem—the student's sense of helplessness and the boy's attempt to hurt other children—was a missed learning opportunity for the student. The student's sense of helplessness should have been addressed, but not at the expense of teaching a boy that hurting his friends is less important than disobeying a student or a teacher. As a matter of fact, we do not really know what the boy learned from the event. His direct voice was not heard at all. However, what is alarming is the student's belief that the boy "understood that he deserved the punishment and that the punishment was right". The student does not consider that the boy's behavior (calm and no longer crying) is not necessarily indicative of his thoughts. She attributes to the child her own thoughts without understanding that the two perspectives might be different.

Roxana's Case: Social Episode #2, May 2008 (Exact Date Not Reported)

Description of Episode #2

This episode occurred outdoors again, but with a different boy. Roxana distributed *falafel* balls, a traditional Israeli treat, to the children. Since there were more *falafel* balls than children, but not enough for two each, she handed the bowl to the children and instructed them to take only one so there would be enough for everyone. In spite of Roxana's clear instructions, one boy took two *falafels* and ate them both. As a result, Roxana promptly called him indoors as an explicit punishment and told him he would have to stay inside for the rest of that day. She explained calmly "the way the teacher did the last time" that he was being punished for not obeying her and not because he ate too much. She also repeated why she had asked the children to eat only one *falafel*. After a while the boy approached Roxana and apologized. When asked about the reason for the

punishment, the boy said that he was being punished "for being a pig and eating more than allowed and not leaving enough treats for the other children". Roxana asked him why she was angry with him to which the boy responded "for not obeying you". Then Roxana made him say again that when the teacher, the assistant, or the student asks to do something and a child disobeys, the child will be punished for disobeying. She again asked him if he deserved to be punished. He looked down and quietly said, "Yes". After a while he approached the student, apologized, and asked if he was forgiven. The student said yes and soon thereafter let him go outdoors.

As we can see from the student's reflection, Roxana regarded her coping with the boy in this episode as particularly effective. Here goals and values play a central role in defining what indeed is effective and what is not. Effectiveness seems to be defined by this student primarily as having the children obey teachers, whereas in the theoretical framework presented in this article, the children's well-being, sense of belonging, and learning opportunities for all are defined as the primary goals of interventions by teachers and students. The student in this case seems to be unaware of the conflict or tension between the two goals. The framework presented in this article considers order and compliance with rules as important tools to achieve well-being and not as an end in themselves. The student considers obedience and order primary goals, and to make herself feel comfortable, she reassures herself that children feel comfortable with these value preferences.

Roxana's Reflection on Episode #2

Roxana opens by saying, "This time I think I acted correctly as I was both assertive enough and not too harsh on the boy…He got the punishment he deserved, accepted it, and understood why he was punished". This explanation is troubling as the student again, as after the first episode, seems to feel that she knows what the boy thinks. The student does not have any evidence of what the boy considers to be the reason for his punishment. Furthermore, the intervention thought by the student to be effective could have contributed, without her being aware of it, to a downgrading of the boy's moral judgment: At the beginning of the episode, he was aware that he was inconsiderate of his peers; at the end, he confirmed by a head nod that disobeying the student was what was wrong. We do not really know what the boy thinks. However, we do know that the student, a teacher-to-be, has no doubt that obedience to authority is a more valued goal of education than hurting peers or being inconsiderate towards them. While after the first episode she was discontent and confused and possibly open to learning, at the end of the second episode, we find her reassured and content. She really solved her

own problem—her sense of helplessness and the thought that she has to be more assertive. She succeeded in having the boy obey her. Nevertheless, her perception is not ecological—she does not consider the impact of her approach on the quality of the relationships with and among the children. Towards the end of her reflection, she explains that what helped her succeed was employing the mentor-teacher's "strategy". We see no evidence of the concepts included in the CM theoretical framework for understanding the complex situations in the kindergarten class. Without much discussion, the student seems to have incorporated the mentor's model guided by a pursuit of obedience as the goal.

Discussion

The Importance of Written Accounts and Narratives

The use of the two case studies above allows us to convey the significance of the role played by the pursuit of social-moral goals in the leadership of kindergarten classrooms. Although operating subtly and invisibly, the value preferences of teachers and teaching students guide their decisions and practice in everyday situations.

These two case studies, including the written accounts of the social episodes, later reflected upon and analyzed by teachers or teachers-to-be, proved to be helpful tools in learning how everyday kindergarten situations are perceived and dealt with by teaching students; they also teach us about processes that are conducive to learning or conditions that hinder the learning of complex CM skills.

Writing and pondering narratives based on episodes have the potential to deepen an understanding among participants of the appropriateness of their interventions and to guide them in improving CM skills. A constructed story of an event is a type of knowledge that helps organize the emotional effects of an experience as well as the experience itself (Smyth and Pennebaker 1999, p. 82).

However, comparison of the two cases also reveals that the procedure used in the CM class was limited in its ability to impact CM perceptions and skills of the teachers-to-be. Its employment in the first case facilitated the development of a complex, ecological perception of kindergartens as a context that must be understood in order to decide on a course of action in a challenging situation. In the second, we witness not only a lack of deep understanding of the meaning of a moral CM approach, but worse, a belief by the teaching student that her coping, which placed obedience above the children's well-being, was evidence of effective CM. What is learned here is that some students need more feedback and discussion in order to develop a morally oriented CM perception. Thus, written accounts

are necessary but not sufficient tools in training for socially moral and ecological leadership in CM.

Identifying a Problem as Impetus for Developing CM Skills

Opportunities to learn were made possible in both cases by a perceived crisis that threatened each student's self perception as a "good" teacher-to-be. The importance of reporting and analyzing cases that deal with a problem or difficulty stems from our understanding that people are more motivated to learn about events that have unwanted outcomes than those with common or predictable effects (Smyth and Pennebaker 1999; Stake 1995). In the first case, the student's sense of guilt motivated her to ponder the situation and extract from the analysis a coping approach that would safeguard the children's well-being. In the second case, the student felt helpless due to a child's disobedience, and also, for a short time, seemed to have bad feelings related to her hasty adoption of punishment as a way to deal with misbehavior. It is noteworthy that in both cases the field mentors' interventions had an impact on the teaching students' thoughts, feelings, and deeds. In the first case, the field mentor noticed an action undertaken by the student that, in the mentor's view, hindered the child's well-being, and she explained to the student that the child's well-being must transcend considerations related to disruptions. This seemed to be enough to start the student thinking about how to develop an approach that would enable the child's self expression, but not disrupt discussion among the other children. In the second case, when the student felt bad about her coping, the teacher intervened to make her feel better without discussing the situation or the pros and cons of coping alternatives. In this case, the teacher's prompt intervention, undiscussed, brought the event to a premature closure that impeded learning.

In both cases, neither the students' coping strategies nor the field mentors' interventions were further discussed with the mentors. Whatever changes were undergone following the mentors' interventions, they were never followed up by the mentors. As evident from this article and the research literature, mentors are important sources of learning for students (Blase 2009). They are models, and as such their actions are constantly imitated by teaching students. In addition, short and frequent interventions such as those presented in this article are part of the everyday experience of teaching students. The values and impact of the guidelines offered by mentors are rarely, if ever, discussed. As put by Franke and Dahlgren (1996), the mentors convey teaching strategies that are taken for granted, unquestioned, as opposed to a reflective approach wherein mentors and students carefully consider and reconstruct their knowledge about teaching. Because the cases presented here were part

of a CM course assignment, we had an opportunity to listen to the students' voices and they could stop and think about their interventions and the field mentors' advice.

Employing Conceptual Tools in the Analysis of Cases

The use of concepts from the theoretical framework presented earlier assisted the first student in formulating a strategy that proved effective. The second student used almost no theoretical conceptions in her analysis. Furthermore, she used discussions from the CM class—which had encouraged the students to find, whenever possible, alternatives to punishing the children—in a somewhat distorted way.

As cases are complex and factors that influence their management and analysis are interrelated, it is hard to determine which factor (writing, use of concepts, mentoring) was most important in determining how the cases were managed by the students. We can conclude, however, that in the first case, it was a combination of factors—a reported crisis or mistake that was noticed by the mentor, who urged the student to favor the child's well-being rather than obedient behavior, combined with a written account of the episode with a thoughtful application of the concepts from the theoretical framework—that were associated with development of an ecological CM perception guided by moral goals, and this perception proved itself effective in dealing with the second social episode. In the second case, we witnessed a teacher's intervention that not only encouraged the student to favor obedience over a child's well-being, but brought the crisis to a premature end. However, we also witnessed in this case an analysis that lacked theoretical depth. No concepts were used by the teaching student to interpret or analyze the social episodes. The fact that the student felt content no doubt helped her dodge the effort to ponder the situation more deeply.

Advantages and Limitations of Case Study Methodology

On the one hand, the use of case studies and an ecological theoretical guiding framework was helpful in some cases. However, a single semester CM course using case study methodology seems insufficient. Some students need more guidance, particularly when in crisis. At minimum, discussions should be held with and among teaching students after interpretation of the first event and before development of a richer strategy of coping. It seems reasonable to expect that beyond learning the CM model in class, college and field mentors would discuss with each student the written accounts of social episodes throughout the training years. An attempt to construct an electronic portfolio

applying these guidelines is currently being instituted at the author's college.

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