

In Memory of Miriam

As Miriam's former student, and later on, as colleague and friend, it feels almost impossible to condense 60 years of scholarship in a short text and still manage to convey the impact of her legacy to teacher education. Such a thought prompted me to write about Miriam's legacy to teacher education not by enumerating her achievements, publications, keynotes, awards etc. but rather through my own experience of being Miriam's doctoral student and then her colleague and friend. Adopting this positioning led me to ask myself the question: *What have I learned from Miriam about the study and practice of teacher education that I have passed on to new generations of students?* So, in composing a narrative that reflects all of the above, I was reminded of five critical moments of my acquaintance with Miriam which have shaped my own scholarship about the study and practice of teacher education. Taken together, these five moments somehow illustrate what I see as Miriam's contribution not just to me, but also to so many researchers and teacher educators nationally and internationally.

Let me introduce moments through five typical phrases of Miriam, one by one:
 (1) "Remember, do not exhaust the reader"
 This is a phrase that Miriam used recurrently with her students when giving feedback on their written chapters, and which I use it all the time in my own work with students. Yet the understanding that the reader must not be overwhelmed goes much beyond its literary meaning. It connects to what I learned from her about the importance of being attentive to who you are communicating the message to. This touches upon recurring themes that characterize her work: impact, perspective taking, and connecting authentically, all of which are rooted in her special gift to establish meaningful links between research, practice and policy in the dissemination of the scholarship of teacher education. As Levin et al. (2013) argue, this is what impact is all about: when research, in any of its multiple forms, 'makes a difference' to subsequent actions that people take or refrain from taking. Miriam's scholarship is an examples of such impact, by bridging three well-known isolate domains: knowledge creation (the production of research-based knowledge relating to education and training) knowledge application (the utilization of research and evidence by educational decision makers, practitioners and other end-users) and knowledge mediation (the brokerage of such knowledge in terms of making it accessible facilitating its spread). Here are some examples of such impact. Her research has contributed to the development and assessment of school curricula, to the implementation of educational policy in teacher education, to the development of Jewish education in Israel and in the Diaspora, to the education of immigrants, especially from Ethiopia and much more. I should also mention one of the most important innovations of her work, which is the integration of theories of memory in research on teachers' work, and the seminal notion of 'curriculum in action.'

Miriam's sensitivity to 'who is reading' is also reflective in how her work considers the systemic, political, and ideological context within which a practice is acquired, reminding us that teaching and learning to teach need to be understood, as Marilyn Cochran-Smith contends, as "an intellectual, cultural and contextual activity". "All research is political" as Oakley, 1988 contends,

and her work is tightly connected to broader values and commitments of the profession, by communicating at different levels of talk with teachers, principals, student teachers, theoreticians, researchers, policy makers (always spiced with her unique combination of humor, assertiveness and rabbinic roots!).

Some vivid examples of her diverse channels of communication are evidenced in her academic and professional roles and positions as Head of the Department of Teaching at the University of Haifa, Dean of its School of Education, founder and head of the Center for Jewish Education in Israel and the Diaspora in Haifa and President of Tel-Hai Academic College. Added to this are the numerous professional committees she headed appointed by the Ministry of Education, including the committee for the matriculation exam reform, the committee assigned to prepare a five-year plan for the Arab sector, and the committee assigned to examine the teacher education process in Israel.

(2) *“Why don’t you look at other domains, for example, Donald Lights’ “Becoming a psychiatrist?”*

This phrase is about providing students with the incentive to ‘dare’ cross disciplinary boundaries and learn from what other domains have to offer. I see this as one of her most precious intellectual gifts as a mentor. The theme that transpires through this phrase is intellectual breadth, creativity and freedom of mind to explore new theoretical terrains. It is about combining parts and whole, about zooming in and out of the experience, always open to scrutiny and re-examination. This kind of broad thinking has been acknowledged during the years through numerous awards: She is the 2006 Laureate of the Israel Prize for Research in Education as well as the receiver of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Educational Research Association (AERA) for her contribution to curriculum studies (1997). She received the American Educational Research Association, Division K (Teacher Education) Legacy Award (2012). She is 2015 Laureate of the EMET prize for research in education, awarded by the Israeli Prime Minister. Since 2009 has been a member of the National Academy of Education (NAED).

(3) *Can you meet me at the MSU airport lobby at 13:00? I can then read the revised proposal on my way to New York”*

Yes, this is a true event and I was there at 13:00 to deliver my hard copy proposal (this was in the previous century of course). You might already have figured out that I didn’t come all the way from Israel, but from Michigan State University (where I was at the time) to the airport...). And this is also just one illustrative example of Miriam’s extraordinary travelling record as an invited speaker and visiting scholar, literally all around the world-and I mean all five continents! But it is also indicative of Miriam’s flexibility, spontaneity and creative thinking both conceptually and pragmatically.

(4) *“Never say it is a reject!”* and the next sentence is: *“You will send it to another journal, a reject is always a “R&R” in another journal”*.

This recurrent phrase is about her constant message of not giving up to the cruelty of the academic world. It is also about aiming high and developing resilience as a researcher. As Bud Goodall (2000) writes: “ To live the writing life as an academic is to agree to live within a culture of criticism “ ...Look at it this way: Prizefighters take fists on the chin , academic writers just get hit with words...The best we can hope for is an encouraging letter from an editor that asks us to “revise and resubmit” . This process can involve several rewrites and resubmissions, until we reach

either clarity or insanity...”. Supporting her mentees to survive the fine line between clarity and insanity requires acting wisely as a mentor. Here I can think of Miriam’s mentoring as wisely navigating between theoretical and practical knowledge, and between cultural awareness, reasoning and acting. Some of her publications attest to this: *The Teacher-Curriculum Encounter: Freeing Teachers from the Tyranny of Texts* (SUNY, 1990), *Learning from Experience: Memory and the Teacher's Account of Teaching* (SUNY, 1995), and *Policy-Making in Education: A Holistic Approach in Response to Global Changes* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

(5) “ *We are inviting some good friends for Friday evening, we would be happy if you could join us* “

I end up the five moments with this quote because it represents so well Miriam’s beautiful and special extra-curricular quality of bringing people together from different backgrounds, generations and domains (professors, students, colleagues and close friends) in informal gatherings at her home for the holidays (for the protocol, this happened on a regular basis once or twice a year) . The conversational floor was always open to any kind of topic: from history, to politics, to education, art and always with a couple of good jokes and, of course, around a full-catered table. This theme is about connecting between people and also about Miriam’s sense of agency. In some of those conversations about teaching and education her agentic position was very clear: That educators should be key players in the process of envisioning and disseminating educational change and in taking up leadership roles in the system. As she often said: “ Teachers can teach us a lot about what needs to be done, both novices and experienced teachers have a lot to say about the educational system, about education, caring, policy, accountability and professionalism”.

Going full circle, and striving to create relevant intersections between tradition and practice, emotion and reason, observation and analysis, doing and thinking is what Miriam has done for our national and international community of researchers, curriculum developers and teacher educators. In this memorial we honor and pay our sincere gratitude and respect to her lifetime achievement and leadership in her work with teachers and teaching: A journey of wealth, breadth and depth that transpires throughout her entire academic and educational career, dedicated to the education of new generations of teachers and educators all over the world; to the enhancement of research-based professional learning and practice; and to the development of research in curricular theory and practice.

Reference

Levin, B., Oi, J., Edelstein H, & Sohu, J. (2013). *The impact of research on education*. Bristol, UK: University of Bristol Policy Press.

