

The College in the Eyes of Its Students

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Abstract: This research deals with the way an organization is perceived by its customers and, more specifically, how a particular organization—a "Teachers' Training College" is viewed by its "customers"—that is, the students studying in it. The study focused on collecting stories written by the students describing their daily lives in connection with their studies in the college. The stories were analyzed by means of four analytical methods: the structural method of LEVI-STRAUSS, PROP's formalistic method, LABOV and WALETSKY's analytic method, and the lexical method of analysis. It was found that the college emerges as a system suffering from a degree of ambiguity, principally with regards to rules, regulations and inter-relations, leading to contradictory expectations and conflicts. This ambiguity may be an outcome of the transition from a "small organization" culture to that of a "large organization," which ties in with the growth in the number and variety of activities that has taken place in the college in recent years, due to a process of academization.

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1. Introduction

The question of how an organization is regarded by its members and customers is an important one for every organization. This research asks how a specific organization—a "Teachers' Training College"—is viewed by its "customers," that is, the students studying in it, whose voices we wished to listen to. We chose to do this by means of stories written by the students describing their daily lives in the college. [1]

1.1 The story as a research tool

People tell stories from an early age and by doing so give significance to their lives, reach out to others, and remember their past. The narrator structures the story by selecting a section from a sequence, by the choice of where to begin the incident and where to end it, by deciding what to include and what to leave out, whom to talk about and to whom not, and also, by deciding the order of narration. Thus, by means of the story, a person organizes his or her experiences into a continuous and significant event, so that, for its part, the story embodies the organizing principle of human activity (BRUNER, 1991). Telling stories is even considered as a chief attribute of the human being—a living creature that creates stories (LIEBLICH, TUVAL-MASHIACH, & ZILBER, 1998). [2]

PALEY (1990) contends that we come to know ourselves, not through groups of tasks or lists of characteristics, but solely through our stories, which are interpreted within the context of our daily lives. CARTER (1993) adds that the story is a form of knowledge that, in a unique way, grasps the nuances and wealth of human events. The story contains rich information—both direct and indirect, conscious and subconscious. Frequently, the narrator is unaware of all the aspects of perception that can spring from the story. These perceptions include expectations and underlying assumptions, and by analyzing them we can gain a wider view of the narrator's understanding. [3]

Various answers exist to the question of what transforms a text into a story, and what are the components that must be present for it to be defined. For instance, YOUNG (1987) speaks of a consequential continuity—one event is the cause of the next one in the story, where the link between them is not necessarily chronological. MITCHELL (1981) speaks of a continuity of subject, while SCHOLLES (1981) defines a story as a description of a series of events that has at least three components: a situation incorporating a conflict, struggle or problem; a character with a role in the situation; and a sequence with causality which finally has some kind of solution. In any event, most researchers agree that it is an integral unit, with a beginning and an end, containing a sequence of events dealing with "what happened," in contrast to texts that deal with what someone claims, thinks, describes, etc. [4]

In our study we chose the classical definition by LABOV and WALETSKY (1967) that supplies clear minimum conditions for determining that a text is a story. LABOV and WALETSKY define a story as one of the methods of recreating a past experience, by matching a sequence of verbal paragraphs or passages to a sequence of events, which (one may assume) previously occurred. Stories that follow a *chronological sequence* of events follow a linear time frame. This order cannot be changed without changing the original semantic interpretation. Nevertheless, just a sequence of events and the recreation of an experience in a story are insufficient. They must be accompanied by the point of view of a narrator, who is interpreting the event. The narrator "asks" to say something beyond the mere contents, in comparison with a report with no conceptual pretensions or messages beyond the statement of facts (POLANYI, 1986). [5]

The stories we investigated belong to the category of "personal narratives," in the words of LANGELLIER (1989), for whom the collection of such personal stories of daily life provides people who are usually unheard with an opportunity for self-expression. Within the category of personal stories, we dealt with students' narratives, that is—the organization's "customers." We wished to know what can be learned about the organization—the college—via the stories of its students. [6]

1.2 Stories as a tool for studying the organization

Since the publication of "Corporate Culture" (DEAL & KENNEDY, 1982), a book which dealt with the cultural attributes of large organizations, many researchers have already discussed the importance of stories as a tool for such a research. One of the prominent ways of transmitting and reinforcing an organization's culture is by means of the stories circulating in it. They are an important part of every organization, and they incorporate its values and traditions. [7]

CLARK (1980) investigated "sagas" (historical narratives that address a group of believers) in American colleges. The sagas were used to integrate members of the organization, and they enabled the researcher to show differences between the various colleges. MARTIN, FELDMAN, HATCH, and SITKIN (1983) object to the claim that specific characteristics of an organization can be identified by means of stories, because they assert that the same stories appear in a variety of organizations. In order to prove this contention, they collected stories from various organizations and tried to see what they had in common. They related mostly to the basic "plots" of the stories and, indeed, found that the different stories did share common elements. However, the authors actually edited out those aspects unique to each organization. [8]

Other researchers assume that personal stories of people in an organization do incorporate the way in which they understand the organizational environment. Researchers sharing this assumption, which also underlies our study, focused on personal stories about the organization and various experiences in it from which they were able to learn about the organization's culture. For example, SCHWARTZMAN (1984) collected and analyzed stories by workers in a Center for Mental Health about their place of work, while KAINAN (1995) analyzed teachers' stories, through which she was able to indicate the characteristics of a particular educational institution. [9]

This study deals with everyday stories describing a single episode that involved students in the framework of their studies in the college, and the way the college is reflected in these narratives. [10]

2. Methodology

2.1 Collection

To obtain a reliable picture reflecting the college, we chose to collect stories from a large number of narrators. We approached students directly and—after a brief explanation of what we meant by a story—we asked them to write down stories about the college, without giving their names or other identifying information. We emphasized that they had the right to choose not to write. [11]

In total, 145 texts were collected from 180 students. After reading all of the texts we excluded those, which were not in accordance with LABOV and WALETSKY's definition of a story.¹ We then excluded stories that did not deal with life at the college. Finally, 111 stories were analyzed. [12]

2.2 Analysis

A story is a complex text in which many meanings can be discovered. We therefore found it convenient to use LANGELLIER'S (1989) proposal to incorporate a number of tools in the analysis. Initially, we chose three classic approaches:

1. *LABOV and WALETSKY's (1967) method* analyzes personal stories according to structural components, each of which has a narrative function—presentation of the situation, advancement of the plot, clarification of the outcome, presentation of the narrator's viewpoint regarding what happened, and how the event continues to affect him or her.
2. *PROP's (1926) method* views a story as comprising a system of actions (functions) and plot advancers (heroes). The analysis includes identification of the characters appearing in the plot and understanding their roles in relation to the goal which the hero wishes to achieve: characters assisting or hindering the hero in the mission.
3. *LEVI-STRAUSS' (1967) approach* is based on finding binary oppositions and fields of content in which such oppositions exist. [13]

The use of these three classical methods allowed us to incorporate a wide approach in our work, and relate to the story and its meaning in its entirety, together with the particular, specific approach which deals with certain parts of the actions and with specific heroes. [14]

At the outset, the goal of our research was only defined in very general terms, without prior assumptions. In the data analysis stage, when clear findings began to emerge, and it became necessary to give them a foundation, we added an additional analytical method—the lexical analysis of a text:

4. *Lexical analysis of a text* includes testing the linguistic characteristics of the text (we focused on those relating to the central finding), and identifying its

1 A text describing a past experience by matching a sequence of events.

cumulative significance. [15]

Two people independently analyzed the stories using each of the methods and then compared their results in order to arrive at reliability. In order not to weary the reader, we shall present only the findings that gave rise to our central assertions. We shall present the findings using terminology commonly found in these categories and with accompanying examples. [16]

3. Findings

3.1 Story analysis using LABOV and WALETSKY's model

As noted, LABOV and WALETSKY analyze a story using six components (abstract, orientation, complicating action, result, coda, and evaluation), of which we shall present just four, since a summary and a coda were found in only few of the stories. [17]

3.1.1 Orientation

reveals the picture of the background in which the story begins, that is, *where the event occurs, the time, the characters involved, the situation and the outcome.*

1. *Place*: In most cases (87.7%) the stories presented the college as the central "where" of the event, while a few (15.3%) took place during practical teaching work (in schools) or on the way to the college. Interestingly, in describing the place, the general statement "in the college" was prominently used—that is, with no reference to a specific location in it. For example, Story 13 begins: "One day in the college ..." And Story 23 opens thus, "One fine day I arrived at the college and discovered to my surprise ..."
2. *Time*: Terms referring to time fall into two categories—regular time (morning, evening, Sunday) and college time (examination period, beginning of the semester). The time statements indicated are almost equally divided between regular (51.5%) and college (49.5%) times.
3. *Characters encountered by the protagonist*: The protagonist meets people from various sectors—administration and management, teachers, and other students. Of these, the major share (54.9%) is of the administration and management. Teachers appear in 17.1% of the orientation, students in 9.9%, and others in 18%. The writer of Story 2 makes a clear distinction between the administrative and pedagogic staff: "As a student in my second year in the college, the thing that bothers me the most is the attitude of those administration workers who are not part of the teaching staff—the secretarial staff and treasury ..."
4. *Situation*: The prominence of the administration and management is again evident when we check the situation defined in the orientation, which is linked to interactions more with administration and management personnel (in 60% of the stories), and less with the teachers (14%), other students (11%), or others (16%). For example, in Story 77, the situation prior to the occurrence con-

cerns the secretariat: "One day, a student came to the secretariat and asked for a form, but the secretary—like—took no notice, she ignored her ..." [18]

In summary, the orientation of the stories, presents the college as a place where they personally interact with other people from two sectors—mostly administration and management and, to a lesser extent, the teachers. The encounters occur in the college, at an indeterminate location, in regular or college time. [19]

3.1.2 The complicating action

The complicating action is the event, which "ignites" the plot (then, this happened). There was such a wide variety within this component so that we were unable to sort them into meaningful categories. It might be that in "everyday stories" the complication action has more variety and differentiation than the rest of the components, because in this kind of stories almost everything can ignite the plot. Another explanation might be that our analysis was not sharp enough to enable a generalization. [20]

3.1.3 The result

About half the stories (49%) present a positive outcome (i.e., to the satisfaction of the narrator—the student), while in 51% of the cases, the outcome is negative. Thus, for example, in Story 11, the narrator is a student who is unwell and therefore cannot return a book to the library:

"One day I was sick—so I stayed home. I was supposed to return a book that day, so I tried to call the college library to get an extension. I'm sorry to say unfortunately, I was calling for hours and getting no answer. Finally, to my relief, somebody picked up the phone at 4 o'clock—and I explained my situation to him—that I was sorry I couldn't make it, and I requested an extension. BUT!!! Surprise, surprise, It can only be done until 4 o'clock—so that it was impossible to extend book loans via the computer.

All my begging was useless because the college has rules and woe to me and them to break the rules.

In the end, I got to the college and paid a fine." [21]

On the other hand, Story 131 has a different outcome:

"For three years I've been getting up in the morning and going to Kaye College. I feel good, happy and contented with myself. And this year, the college again proved its ability to be flexible and meet the student halfway.

Since I both teach and study, I borrowed a textbook from the library and had to return it in a few days I got home and put the book on the shelf. The days passed and I forgot about it. A fortnight later I wanted to borrow a book from the library and was upset to discover that the other book was still at home and I would have to pay a fine of 80-90 sheqels [approximately U.S. \$20]. The librarian suggested I go to the management, since it didn't seem to be a usual thing for me.

The following day I went to the library manager, she understood my situation and canceled my fine. You can always see the cup half-empty (the over crowding, the pressure) but there are many positive things (new toilets, pleasant library services). Here's hoping the half-full cup continues to be refilled." [22]

In the latter story, the non-return of the book ends with the fine being waived, while in the former one, it leads to a rigid application of the rules. One might logically expect that similar circumstances will lead to similar outcomes, or reasonably expect that when the student is ill, there should be greater flexibility, yet in the stories this is not so. [23]

When we check the distribution of outcomes, it appears there are more negative than positive outcomes (42% against 31.5%) where administration and management are involved. The opposite is true about contacts with teachers and other students (33.6% and 20.4% positive versus 26.3% and 15.8% negative, respectively). [24]

In Story 26, a meeting with management that had a negative outcome is described:

"At the end of my third year I got a letter in the mail listing a number of courses I had to make up. I was prepared to manage without two of them and to do so, I was told to apply to Ruth Cohen².

On the day of registration for the 4th year, I bumped into Ruth Cohen in the corridor and asked her, 'When can I make an appointment to see you?' The honorable lady answered me in a hostile and irritable tone and showed impatience. I managed, more or less, to explain what the matter was, and while she walked on and with her back to me said, 'Put your request to me in writing.' And in an even more aggressive tone, 'I've no time for you now.'

I remained rooted to the spot, speechless, and asked myself what in the world is happening to human relations?

That's not the first time I encountered a humiliating attitude in the college—offensive and embarrassing to both sides, the student and the staff person. What a pity—it spoils the experience of studying in this place.

I know from experience that a smile is like a yawn. One starts and the other does the same—it's simply contagious!!!" [25]

On the other hand, in Story 145, we find a meeting with a teacher and other students with a positive outcome:

"I got to play for the college for the first time in a basketball game because a few regular players were missing, and in that game I scored 26 points and proved that I was worthy of joining the team. That game increased my self-confidence, and I continued to demonstrate my abilities in the rest of the games. The other players began to have faith in me and my abilities, and I even gained the respect of more

2 All names were changed.

senior players in the team, and especially the coach, Ronny Cohen, whom I respected for the faith he placed in me and the confidence he inspired in me.

I think that since then I raised the standard of my game, because of the fact that I was playing with players from higher leagues." [26]

To sum up, the interaction of the student with the various people yields results, about half of which are positive and half negative, from the student's point of view. The findings indicate that the outcome cannot be predicted. Negative outcomes are more frequent in interactions with administration and management, than with teaching personnel. [27]

3.1.4 Evaluation

The evaluation is an expression of the position taken by the narrator regarding the events in the story. It can appear throughout the whole text, and uses images and metaphors, repetitions and other means. [28]

What do the evaluations deal with?

We found that in 55.3% of the evaluations in the stories refer to the interactions between the students and administrative and management personnel, teaching staff, or with other students. About a quarter (24.5%) dealt with the attitude to rules and regulations. [29]

In Story 66, the greatest importance is placed on the interaction between teachers and students:

"I call this story 'the relationship between teachers and students.' This story deals with what happened between me and a college teacher after the exams when I spoke to him in a very respectful manner. When I approached him, I asked him if he had marked the exams, and his first sentence to me was—in his exact words—'Allow me to feel you're a student in the college and allow me to feel that I'm a teacher in the college.'

My reaction was to express my sorrow and I said to him: 'I am sorry if I offended you but I do not think I did.'

This incident reflects most of the teachers' or lecturers' attitudes to the students, and I can only hope you pay attention to this phenomenon, which, after this incident, I view as very important, even more than the studying itself." [30]

Positive or negative evaluation:

When we checked whether the evaluations were essentially positive or negative, we found the majority (60%) was negative with the rest being positive³. More negative evaluations related to rules and regulations and to the administration

3 It may be that students interpreted our request for stories as an opportunity to ventilate and to bring up complaints. Consequently, even if their general experience of the college is positive, they tended to choose problematic aspects of it. Nevertheless, it is still interesting to examine what bothers the students and to what do they relate them.

staff, that is, there was criticism of the system, while the attitudes towards interpersonal relationships were more positive. Here is an example of a negative evaluation:

"The year I began to study in the college, I encountered an attitude of contempt or indifference from a college staff member. It happened like this. At the beginning of the year, when I paid my tuition fees, I accidentally transferred more money than needed, (and the difference was significant—1,000 sheqels). When I applied the financial office with a request to return the amount, they promised to do so after the end of the first semester. After the first semester, I went in to get my money. But I was unsuccessful! This time the excuse was, 'When you finish the year and we see your grades, then you'll get your money back.' And they added: 'Why are you making a fuss about a mere 700 sheqels!'

Towards the end of the year I returned to them. But the story repeated itself—I didn't get the money! I had no option left but to ask the help of the dean of students. Only with her intervention did I finally get my money—the same day!

I did get the money! But my first impression of the college was already spoiled and, after all, first impressions are the strongest (at least for me) and I was still left with an unpleasant feeling after my first encounter with the financial office. Of course I avoid them as much as possible." [31]

An example of a positive evaluation (Story 34):

"During my first year, I underwent a number of changes from which I learned a little about myself. I started studying in a certain college, after I came back from a trip to South America. The trip itself opened a window for me to see things in the world. To learn about myself in a different way from what I thought or saw before I went. When I came back after some 4 months, I began my studies in the college.

For a couple of weeks I went around that college like 'Casper the Ghost.' Talking to nobody, not allowing any chances of communication. I didn't care about the studies; my mind was just full of the pictures, the landscapes, and the smells that I had left behind in South America.

After a fortnight, I decided to study in Beer-Sheva for many reasons: the first reason was personal—a boyfriend studying in the south, in Beer-Sheva—I wanted to get away from the bustling, crowded center, from the hypocrisy of all the people around me! From the college, from my close friends.

So I turned towards Beer-Sheva. The process of registration was pleasant, I went into the first lesson, a first year lesson: the class was already quite tightly-knit, the girls already knew each other, either from studying together in high-school, close friends from the same neighborhood, and so on ...

What has happened since then is another story altogether ..." [32]

The narrator builds her text in three parts: the trip, characterized by a spiritual opening up and by change, the studies in the first college, characterized by withdrawal and alienation, and the transfer to the present college, where the description of genuine close relations again returns, contrasted to the hypocrisy

she encountered in the previous college, a description that is built in a long sentence that "flows" by means of commas. [33]

Emotional intensity:

In most of the stories the emotional level is not high (56%), while in 44% it is. [34]

An example of low emotional intensity is found in Story 12:

"One fine day I bought a photocopying card. I chose a book, photocopied a number of pages, returned the book to the shelf and left the library.

A few minutes later I noticed that the card of 100 copies I had bought was missing. I had forgotten it in the Xerox machine. I went right back to the library and the card was already gone ..." [35]

An example of high intensity: for some of the students the process of acceptance or rejection is accompanied by significant emotional intensity. Thus, in Story 86⁴ in which a management decision to suspend studies due to the student failing to gain minimum grades in a basic subject was accompanied by disappointment. This disappointment is expressed by strong detailed images, and use of generalizations such as "all" and "every."

I was accepted to the college on the condition that my grade. In Arabic would be over 65, but, to my sorrow, when I went into the second year I didn't get that grade. But the second year I had another chance to do the examination. However, the head of the department decided to do us a suspend of studies. That decision disappointed me. I wasn't given any hope for my life at all, and I also did not eat.

It hurt me so much because that was not only me involved, on my own. My father much wanted me to learn and in the end I disappointed him. I couldn't stand it, I was crying all the time and also my parents took me almost every day to the hospital because I had weakness when breathing and I had pains all over. At that time I asked God to kill me, all of this not just because they told us we decided to suspend your studies, but because they were not speaking to us nicely, they were very angry and even shouted. It is very painful, all my life I won't forget the words they spoke us, in all my life I won't forget the pains I felt!

But in the end they gave us a half program, for me it was like a bone given to a dog so it won't bark." [36]

Evaluation of rules and regulations:

Distribution of evaluation of rules and regulations into sub-categories shows that most of the evaluations (57.1%) defined them as flexible, and a little more than a quarter (28.6%) defined them as rigid. [37]

4 It should be noted that this student's native language is not Hebrew, so an attempt has been made to indicate the problematic grammar and syntax in the English translation.

In Story 69⁵ the opinion of the student is clearly that the regulations are flexible, so that bending the rules due to family connections (known in Hebrew as "protectsia") is not viewed as non-legitimate:

"The story I'm going to tell happened to me at the start of the registration process for the 1st year, when I came to register at the college a problem happened with me that almost sabotaged my studies! It was the day of the entrance exam. I came to the exam and went in. When they came to check my I.D. card it turned out I forgot it at home, so I was to leave the exam. We argued a little and in the end I left the exam and went straight to one of the teachers who was responsible for the registering in the college, and lucky for me he knew me and knew my family and we went together to the exam room and he succeeded to return me to the exam on his responsibility! I returned to the exam and already half the time for the exam had passed and I began to close questions and in the end I passed that exam and I was accepted to the studies.

In the English placement exam, I also forgot my I.D. card and the teacher who succeeded to return me to the entrance exam was not there. So I left the exam and they put me in the lowest level." [38]

To sum up, an analysis of the evaluations shows that the students regard the interactions in the college as very important and expect that the system of interpersonal relations, both with the administration and with the teaching staff would be good. [39]

Some of the students take the viewpoint that interpersonal relations are not good. Teachers preserve their distance; the financial office treats the needs of the students with indifference, and so on. There are others who think that the registration procedures are pleasant and the relationships are warm and friendly. Most of the evaluations regarding the management are negative, that is, there is criticism of the way the administrative system functions, and to a lesser extent, this also applies to the teaching system. [40]

In addition, regarding the rules and regulations the evaluations were divided between those regarding them as flexible (57%) and others seeing them as rigid and strictly enforced. A high degree of emotion was present in about 44% of the evaluations, and was especially high in stories with a negative outcome. [41]

3.1.5 Summary of LABOV and WALETSKY analysis

From the LABOV and WALETSKY analysis we found that the college was regarded by the students as the central site where events occurred. The main topic concerning the students involved interactions, principally with administrative and management personnel, at various times—both throughout the year and at special times (exams, start and end of semester). A significant finding regarding the described events is a lack of definition and consistency: there is no specific place or time, a teacher-student encounter can be in a classroom or the corridor,

5 Student's native language is not Hebrew.

the outcomes in similar situations can be positive or negative. The student evaluations are also divided—is the college a place with warm and friendly interpersonal relations and with flexible regulations, or is it formal and cold, with strictly enforced regulations? [42]

3.2 Story analysis by the PROP model

3.2.1 Character of the protagonist

The analysis in terms of this model required us to focus on the main characters in the stories—the protagonists and their concerns, the characters they meet and the function they have for the protagonists—helping or hindering in achieving their goals. [43]

Who is the protagonist?

In the great majority of our stories (94%), the narrator is the protagonist, i.e., the student. [44]

What is the protagonist concerned with?

The protagonist is mainly concerned with activities associated with studies (75.7%). Only a small part of the actions are social in character (9%), or have social involvement beyond achieving the student's personal goals (11.7%). [45]

Of the actions associated with studies in which the students engage, the majority concern fulfilling requirements imposed on them by the system (73.8%), such as passing exams, handing in assignments, etc., and especially those involving the formal requirements the students must meet in order to progress further and continue their studies. Only 13.1% of the study-related actions were concerned with their personal development as students. Take, for example, Story 25 in which a student is worried by the pursuit of a grade:

"A long long time ago (about 5 months) a student (called Shira Din) had an annual mathematics exam in the college. After a month, perhaps less, she happened to bump in to her mathematics teacher in the corridor. She was curious to know her math grade and asked the lecturer about it. The nice lecturer agreed to tell it to her verbally (the grade was 92⁶), and off she gaily went on her way. Some time later, her grade report was mailed to her home, but for some reason, the mathematics grade was missing.

What did she do? She applied to the secretariat, but they answered that they had no idea, and presumably the teacher never handed the grade in. She tried to get the teacher's telephone number, but it was restricted.

What did she do? Again she asked the secretariat for help, but there was no help or answer.

What did she do? Let the subject drop until she was asked by you to write her story.

6 The mark scale is 1-100, 100 being the maximum.

There is another incident that made the student unhappy. In one of the courses she got a 94, but the teacher made a mistake and typed in 89.

What did she do? Applied to the secretariat who again told her to see the lecturer—the lecturer was abroad. She waited and waited. The lecturer came back from abroad and understood she had made a mistake, but the grade has still not been corrected ...

What did she do/will do?" [46]

Characteristics of the protagonist:

The protagonist has two main attributes: activity (50.5%) and emotional motivation (23.1%). Take, for example, Story 38, in which the student describes his repeated attempts to rectify a procedural matter:

"Last year, in the 1st semester, I got married in December. According to the college regulations, I was supposed to ask the dean of students for a permit for a week's absence. And so I did! Three weeks before the wedding I went to the dean of students. I made an appointment to see her, at which I requested the permit for a week's vacation, because I was getting married. The dean congratulated me and gave me a permit for a week.

I decided to photocopy the permit and distribute it to all the teachers of the courses I was taking, so they wouldn't count me absent on the day of the lesson. And so I did. I gave a copy to each teacher. Most of the teachers congratulated me and told me not to worry, just to make up the missing material.

Except for one teacher who was not prepared to accept the permit and claimed that because I had not missed any lesson that semester, the day I was going to miss would be marked as an absence.

Of course I objected, because it's not supposed to count towards the 20% [the permitted amount of absence] and it would block my right to miss a class, if I would really have to be absent. So I went back to the dean and explained the situation. She talked to the teacher who agreed not to take my absence into account." [47]

The second most common characteristic of the protagonists is their emotional drive. That is, the emotional, rather than the cognitive aspect, and the system of relations with the teachers and administrators have a great effect on the way they feel, act and study. Take, for example, Story 21, in which a student describes the depth of her feelings accompanying the exercise of teaching a class to her fellow students:

"My first exercise in teaching my colleagues:

In the first year, one of our first and main assignments was to teach a lesson to the rest of the class—what is called 'peer teaching.' The week before my lesson was a great strain. I was very worried that the lesson wouldn't be a success and we would get unpleasant criticism. The night before I hardly slept and kept thinking about the lesson. In the morning I could hardly eat anything. And I arrived, pale and trembling

all over. In the end, the lesson went excellently, and I felt really good afterwards. So, after all it was a positive experience that helped me thereafter." [48]

3.2.2 *Other characters encountered by the protagonists*

are from two main fields—the pedagogic (38%) and administration-management (38%), and they hinder ("villains") or help the protagonists ("helpers" and "donors") in achieving their goals. The great majority appears as hindering (67%), rather than helping (17%). At the same time, a higher percentage of the teaching staff than the administration act to help (46.2% versus 27%). In Story 137, the management character hinders:

"I needed to pay money for a class trip and I went to the treasury and paid. I took out a 100-sheqel bill and I was supposed to get change. But for some reason the clerk didn't give it to me and I was in a hurry to get home. Only when I got on the bus I realized I didn't have the money and then remembered I hadn't got the change. When I got back to the office, it was already closed. The next day I went in and explained to the clerk that she forgot to give me my change, and she should check to see if her cash matched what she put in when she opened the register. But for some reason she didn't want to check, took out the money and said to me, 'Here. I'm giving you money from my own pocket.'" [49]

In Story 138, the characters from the teaching staff appear as helpers: the student has a problem with one of the pupils in his class. A report to his adviser and the sports teacher leads to an apology from the pupil and the matter is closed:

"An experience I had in my fieldwork in school.

This year, in my practice teaching in an elementary school in one of the Beer-Sheva neighborhoods, I and two other colleagues doing our field teaching had an unpleasant experience. In one of the lessons we were supposed to give, the sports teacher was busy with rehearsals for some ceremony or other, so we had to divide the class into two. The boys played football and the girls played dodge ball. One of the boys in the class who had been suspended that day arrived with his own ball and began to bother the girls and the boys. After we had told him to leave the yard, because he was causing a nuisance and he had ignored our request, we were forced to take his ball away from him until the end of the lesson. The boy responded with curses, but we paid no attention, continued the lesson and afterwards, returned his ball to him. At the end of the day, when we were leaving the school and walking outside along the fence, the same pupil began to curse us and then even threw stones at us for a few minutes. Luckily, not one stone hit us. We reported the incident to our training teacher and also to the sports teacher, and indeed, that pupil was punished by being suspended for a number of days and his parents were summoned to school. In the end, he sent us a letter of apology a week later." [50]

To sum up, the PROP analysis presents us with a drama in which the students are the central character, and they have a primary aim they want to achieve, i.e., a teaching certificate. To that end, they have to fulfill many assignments that keep

them busy. The students are active and energetic in all that relates to achieving their goal. A few students are also concerned with social relations with other students, and even fewer are socially involved. [51]

The characters who accompany the protagonists are the same ones we have already met in the LABOV and WALETSKY method: administrative/management personnel (treasury, general manager) and teaching staff (lecturers, teacher trainers). In the PROP analysis, these characters would take on the role of a protagonist either helping or hindering the students. In this situation, the administrative individuals are regarded as more harmful than the pedagogical staff, because they do not do their job properly, or because they insist on following the letter of the law, and show indifference to the students' problems. [52]

3.3 Story analysis by the LEVI STRAUSS model

As noted, the LEVI STRAUSS method is based on finding binary oppositions that are found in the investigated fields according to their contents (geographic, social ideological, economic). Two fields appeared prominently in the students' stories—the ideological field that dealt with expectations (46.2% of the descriptions that involved fields), and the geographical, that dealt with going from here to there (30.6%). Other fields were the social (12.7%), which were characterized by hierarchical relations, and the economic (10.4%), which were too small in number to produce significant meaning. [53]

3.3.1 The geographic field—site of the event and the student's activities

The first finding is that most of the movements the students mentioned (running around, going from place to place) takes place within the college (66% of all the relevant descriptions), with a minority occurring on the way to it, or during field work (34%). This finding fits the LABOV and WALETSKY analysis which showed that most of the stories take place in the college. But the second finding adds more accurate information about the nature of the movement within the college: here we find a description of an exhausting circuit that begins in one location and goes from place to place until the story is concluded. In order to deal with any particular matter, the student must make an "odyssey," presented as "the run-around." This "run-around" is sometimes presented as necessary, and sometimes as a complaint, but always as the opposite of a direct and simple route. For example, Story 72 deals with running around from one staff member to another within the college. The route is portrayed in Illustration 1:

"One time I took books from the library and returned them in time. When I went to the computer to check my grade, it was blocked to me! I asked the treasury why it was blocked and asked her to check if I had any problems with tuition fees. So she checked and said there were no problems with my tuition, and that everything was in order. So I asked where the problem was. She told me to go to the library and check it out there, the problem was sure to be there. I went there and asked and they told me I hadn't returned one book and I had to pay a fine on it. I swore I had returned the book but she didn't believe me and sent me to find the book, and I found it. And she

still didn't cancel the fine and sent me to the library manager. We had an argument until she finally produced some list of the books I had taken. It showed I had returned the book, so then she canceled the fine, and the block in the computer was lifted." [54]

Direct Route Student	Run-Around Student				
Student takes book	1. student takes book	2. returns book	3. checks computer	4. checks with treasury	5. checks with librarian
Student returns book	9. book found	8. sent to manager	7. goes back to librarian	6. looks for book	
Goal achieved	Goal achieved				

Illustration 1: A run-around route as seen in story 72 [55]

The "run-arounds" present a *picture of lack of clarity* of the regulations or definition of personnel responsibilities, lack of trust in the students, and poor service. Story 79 describes another type of run-around—from station to station in order to get from home to a school which is the site of the field work:

"There was a 3rd year student who did her field work on Mondays and Wednesdays, and she had to travel to a different place because of her field work. She lives in village X and has her practice in village Y she asked her instructor she to do her field training where she lives because it is hard for her to travel to village Y and also the parents don't agree so much she should travel alone to village Y and said there are schools here where you can get your field training. The instructor refused her request and she didn't know what to do. She thought she will take a break in her studies but in the end she found a friend who also travels to village Y and arranged with her the matter and every day she waits for her by the college and together they go down to the open market and from there they take a taxi. And sometimes in a public bus that lets them off at the entrance to the village and they continue on foot. They walk 45-60 minutes to get to the school. They arrive tired and they also have no desire to teach. They hate their field training and the school. And so they suffered the whole year going and coming to get their training and in the end, when the instructor came to watch them giving a lesson they didn't succeed and got a low grade. And it's not because they don't know how to teach, but because of the situation. As they said if you hate or don't like something you can't give to it. Because you do it unwillingly." [56]

3.3.2 The ideological field

In our case, this refers almost entirely to the system of student expectations of the college. Descriptions including expectations split into three categories: expectations for good that "came out bad," expectations for good that "came out good," expectations for bad that "came out good." [57]

We found that the most common category was that the student expected that something positive would occur or end well, and contrary to expectations, that did not happen and it "came out bad" (78.7% of all the descriptions that related to expectations). Thereafter, in descending order: expectations for good that "came out good"—13.8%, expectations for bad that "came out good"—7.5%. [58]

It should be noted that in the LEVI STRAUSS analysis, the percentage of "good" expectations was higher than that for "bad" expectations, but in contrast, according to the LABOV and WALETSKY analysis, it was found that the actual ending ("good" or bad") was expressed in similar percentages of positive and negative results. In addition, the evaluations according to the LABOV and WALETSKY method were more negative than positive. Perhaps the unfulfilled expectations for a positive outcome contributed to the greater number of negative evaluations. In Story 40, the gap between expectation and reality is very pronounced:

"Yarden studies in the 2nd year for elementary school teaching—she had really enjoyed her studies in the 1st year, and enthusiastically began her 2nd year studies. She wanted to be a good teacher, to do a lot of field teaching but also to enrich herself in all sorts of areas important to the profession.

But the disappointment arrived when she tried to organize her schedule ... she found out that the possibilities were limited, but nevertheless, signed up for a six hour cluster in a field she had not yet studied: special education.

The other girls chose to sign up for as many six-hour clusters as possible that would make the schedule easier, both in terms of hours and also in terms of subjects. Yarden refused to take the easy way out, but afterwards she realized that her choice would 'make her pay,' and her schedule would choke her. In the end, Yarden gave in and did like everyone else, choosing a major specialization, and apart from that trying to arrange an easier life, closing a six hour cluster in Judaism (that doesn't interest her that much) and even closing a six hour cluster in art (absolutely not her field).

Yarden is asking herself why? Why pressure the students and almost 'force' them to go for the easy, rather than the interesting—Yarden feels she has to 'survive' and pass, and the mediocrity that that involves is not to her taste." [59]

To sum up: LEVI STRAUSS analysis reinforces the picture that indicates there is something unclear to the students. Life in the college does not follow clear regulations, and the students have to "shlepp" from official to official in order to achieve their objectives. There is a contrast between the expected and the desired, where, in most cases the expectation is for a good outcome, but is followed by disappointment. [60]

3.4 Interim summation of the findings according to the three approaches

The three analyses, although based on differing methods, provided an overall picture that emphasizes the bureaucratic/administrative and interpersonal aspects. [61]

3.4.1 Administration, bureaucracy and formal requirements

The analyses according to all three methods present a picture of much concern with bureaucracy, rules and regulations, and administration. Although the students come to study and the greatest slice of the cake of their time is supposed to be devoted to their encounters with the teaching staff, in practice, the encounters with the administration color (strongly influences) their general experience. The characters inhabiting the stories are equally divided in the analyses between those from the pedagogical and from the administrative/management fields. However, the described situations deal mainly with administration/management staff. The students appear as people for whom their studies are their main preoccupation, but these studies are presented as a system of tasks to be fulfilled, formal requirements the student must meet, rather than an educational/cognitive process. The "assignment" aspect predominates—the many requirements to be fulfilled in order to receive a formal certificate. The students are the central protagonists in the stories and are presented as very active, but again, in the same field of meeting obligations which are the demands of the formal system. [62]

The fulfillment of obligations involves much shuffling between offices and various personnel, or what is called in slang "the run-around," i.e., going from place to place in order to arrange some affair, and this colors the students' attitude to the matter. In their moving around, the students meet a majority of negative or harmful, mainly in the administration, and a minority of positive, helpful, characters. The results of the students' efforts with regard to management are generally more negative than those relating to the teaching staff or other students. [63]

In light of the great concern with the administration and the negative attitude to it, it would have been logical to expect the students to view the regulations as rigid and bothersome in achieving their objectives, but this was not so. More students judge the regulations as flexible. There is an ambivalent attitude to the bureaucracy—it is not clear if there is a lot of bureaucracy or not; it is unclear whether the place is seen as formal and alienated, giving the students the run-around, or an informal place in which there is an expectation of a personal, caring attitude. [64]

3.4.2 Interpersonal relations and relationships

There are a few hierarchical relationships in the stories. More space is given to interpersonal and social relations. In the stories, the students only sometimes describe relations with their peers, and refer more often to their teachers, and most frequently write about the administration staff. Similarly, the students only rarely deal with social activities between themselves or refer to social involvement. [65]

The students accord a central place to interactions, most of the evaluations deal with relationships, and these are more positive than negative. The interactions

are regarded as the most positive with other students, less so with the teachers, and the least positive with the management. In a notable number of stories (44%), there is a strong emotional force and/or very prominent concern. [66]

After receipt of the results from all three analytical methods, it seemed that there were findings characteristic of a large, formal organization, where the bureaucracy plays a central and prominent role, and with which the system of relations is not pleasant. But at the same time, there were other findings consistent with a small, informal place, with much importance accorded to interpersonal relations and with good interchanges. That is to say, the results were ambiguous, and it was not clear if the college acted as a large or small organization. [67]

3.4.3 *Small organization—large organization*

Interpreting the findings from the three types of analysis, it appears that the students simultaneously regard the college as both large and formal and small and informal. [68]

An examination of the literature revealed that, in recent years, many researchers have dealt with the question of the size of educational institutions. The revival of the question is related to a movement that SIZER (1984, 1996) began, setting itself the task of turning large urban schools into small schools, in light of the many relative advantages the small schools have. The researchers start with the assumption that size is a structural property of every organization and it has an intrinsic, independent influence, regardless of other properties (e.g., MEIER, 1995). SIZER (1996) speaks of size as one of the important factors that determine the quality of life in a school. GARBARINO (1980) suggests we look at the polarity, big/small school, not as a linear continuum, but as a dichotomous variable: with up to 500 students, the influence of the place will be called that of a small institution, and above 500, that of a large one. [69]

From our bibliographic survey of 166 articles, it can be seen that:

1. about 75% of the articles agree that the size of a school has a clear affect on the lives of the students and teachers;
2. about 85% of the articles try to show that the big school has difficulties, and they suggest alternatives or solutions to the problem;
3. most of the articles, which emphasize the advantages of small schools, focus on *the emotional/social aspects* of the school (60%);
4. the articles that emphasize emotional/social aspects, specifically or indirectly, talk about feelings of alienation to which, the authors believe, life in the framework of a big school can lead;
5. since the studies mostly focus on an attempt to check what is the optimum size, the authors have less interest in the properties of such schools. Nevertheless, one can find statements in the studies about the typical characteristics of large and small places, regarding their bureaucracy,

communication, flexibility, social relations, degree of caring and degree of student participation. [70]

Bureaucracy

The large school has more bureaucracy (MEIER, 1999; KLONSKY, 1995) than a small school (MEIER, 1995; FUSARELLI, 1999). Moreover, in a large school, there is a growth of bureaucratic requirements that make demands on both students and teachers (LEE & SMITH, 1995). Also, big schools are linked to bureaucratic inefficiency (KLONSKY, 1995). Thus, SERGIVANNI (1996) defines a big school as an organization and a small school as a community. [71]

Communication

Communication is faster and more efficient in a small place or, in the words of MEIER (1995), "everybody knows." [72]

Flexibility

Small schools are characterized by greater flexibility, primarily in teaching programs (COTTON, 1996). [73]

Social relations

In a small place there are close relations and familiarity between teachers and students (MEIER, 1995; PETERS, 1999). School size influences social interaction (CAPPS & MAXWELL, 1999), while in a big school relations are impersonal (MEIER, 1999) and there is personal loneliness (KLONSKY, 1995). On the other hand, in small schools, a high level of interpersonal relations is found (FOWLER & WALBERG, 1991). There is a difference in the relations between adults and children between schools: in a large school, 70%-80% of the pupils belong to social groups that have no connection with adults. In a small school, the young have daily contact with the adults who work there (MEIER, 1995). [74]

Involvement and caring versus alienation

School size affects the level of alienation of those who attend it. In a small school, there is a feeling of community, caring (CAPPS & MAXWELL, 1999), and belonging (MEIER, 1995). A small school is more aware of the needs of the community and the students (FUSARELLI, 1999), and teachers and students are concerned about each other (RAYWID, 1995; KLONSKY, 1995). On the other hand, in a large school, where there is alienation, there are problems of discipline and criminal behavior. [75]

Participation and activity

BARKER and GUMP (1964), who wrote the first and best known book on the subject, found that the degree of pupil participation in extra-curricular activities

clearly differentiates between the two types of organization: pupils in a small school participate in more, and more varied activities; do so with greater will; and achieve greater leadership. They claim that an optimal number of pupils is that which all of them will need to take part in school activities. MORGAN and ALWYN (1982) repeated the research of BARKER and GUMP on a wider basis, and their findings reinforce the original claims. A similar phenomenon is found among the teachers: in small schools, HORN (1983) found that despite the great similarity in the teachers' obligations in each type of school, those in small schools carried out more non-teaching obligations. [76]

We can sum up by saying that according to the research literature, the characteristics of a small school are: lack of bureaucracy, good communication, organizational flexibility, and involvement in personal and social relations. In contrast, the attributes of a large place are: bureaucracy and multiplication of bureaucratic requirements, problems of lack of efficiency, lack of communication, organizational rigidity, formal, impersonal relations, an atmosphere of alienation, and a lack of involvement. [77]

3.5 Lexical analysis

In order to find a basis for the central findings, we investigated, by means of lexical analysis of the stories, what verbal expressions and descriptions appear dealing with characteristics of a small or large place. These are presented in Table 1.

Small informal place	No. of expressions in stories	% of total expressions	Large, formal place	No. of expressions in stories	% of total expressions
use of first names	17	7.12	use of titles and degrees	65	27.2
understanding and consideration for personal problems	22	9.2	lack of consideration for personal problems	5	2.1
flexibility regarding rules and regulations	24	10.1	sticking by rules and regulations	25	10.5
communication by personal conversation and in the hall	31	14.0	formal communication (office hours, electronic correspondence)	14	5.8

egalitarian speech patterns	14	5.8	hierarchical speech patterns	22	9.2
	108	46.22		131	54.8
Total number of usages = 239					

Table 1: Words and expressions relating to organization size characteristics [78]

Expressions linked to both small and large organizations occur, with those relating to a large place being slightly more numerous. In many cases, descriptions applying to both types of place appear in the very same text, as, for example in Story 136⁷:

"Last year, I took a certain course and handed in a seminar paper on 4.10.98. I waited for my grade. After a month, I started calling the voice mail twice a week, to find out my grade. But I didn't get a grade. I called the lecturer and he told me I'd get my grade in a little while. I waited about another two weeks and called the voice mail, which had apparently been disconnected in the meantime and made into a regular phone. Again I didn't have an answer. I applied to the pedagogical secretariat and was told that no grade had been submitted. I turned to a friend of mine who had also handed in a seminar paper in the same course to find out if she had already received her grade. She didn't have it either, and she told me that about another 15 girls hadn't gotten their grade yet. She suggested we apply to YORAM⁸ to learn what can be done about the matter. After all, 3 months have already gone by and still no grade. I contacted the college and talked to Yoram. He asked me to check again with the secretariat. I told him I had checked two days earlier, but I was ready to try again. I called in and the secretary told me that on that very day, the lecturer handed in my grade. Finally, finally, I could stop being worried." [79]

In the story there are expressions such as: lecturer, pedagogical secretariat and secretary, alongside the use of a first name. This formal expression is suited to the contents: although there is a rule regarding the return of work on time, this rule is not strictly observed. Communication is made by means of voice mail, but even personal phone calls to the secretary, while with Yoram LEVY there is a hierarchical approach, according to which the senior staff member outranks the secretary, but one can call and talk to him without a prior appointment. [80]

7 Student's native language is not Hebrew.

8 Yoram LEVY, a senior member of staff.

4. Conclusions and Discussion

An overview of all the findings obtained from the four methods of analysis shows that they fall under headings suited to the attributes appearing in the literature as typical of both a large and a small organization: on the one hand, bureaucracy and multiplication of bureaucratic demands, little interaction outside the framework of studies; and on the other hand, an expectation of organizational flexibility and an emphasis on interpersonal relations. [81]

That is to say, the findings simultaneously point in two directions: the first views the college as a place with the attributes of a large place: the bureaucracy that makes many demands and assignments, with much chasing about, seen by the students as negative. Similarly, the societal field, especially in the relations between students and each other, appears as weak, finding hardly any place in the students' stories. What characterizes an alienated place is that personal relations are unimportant there. The college is regarded as instrumental—a place to get a certificate. [82]

The second direction is one that views the college as a place with the attributes of a small place: relations between people are regarded as important and significant and they appear as positive, principally in contrast to the rules and regulations. There exists a basic expectation that things will turn out well despite the administration and the bureaucratic demands, and the rules are seen as open to change and negotiation, rather than final and rigid. There is an expectation of personal communicative relations, that is, an approach to each matter on a personal level and on its own merits, with a relaxation of rule-based, egalitarian and consistent relations. [83]

Moreover, conflicting findings can be found within each of the categories—a description of organizational rigidity versus an expectation of organizational flexibility. There is a mixture of occupation with relations and with tasks, simultaneous feelings of closeness and distancing, and contrasting expectations that lead to uncertainty and conflicts. There is a condition of ambiguity—it is not clear to the students if they are in a small or large organization. It is likely that the ambiguity may indicate a transitional phase in the development from an organization with the attributes of a small informal place, to a large and formal one. It appears there is a close connection with the fact that the college, following processes of academization, finds itself at a turning point from a small place, characterized by the importance of personal relations, flexibility, lack of hierarchy and good feelings, to a large place, characterized by bureaucracy, bureaucratic demands and feelings of alienation and non-involvement. [84]

In a transitional stage, tension is created between, on the one hand, the need for continued security and stability that the old norms and customs imparted, and on the other, the need for innovation. Apparently, it is just in the aspect of bureaucracy, characterized by conservatism and the need to preserve the existing frameworks, that this tension is then conspicuously sevenfold. The administrative staff represents the impersonal aspect that performs in the service

of the rules, "without regard to the clients or sensitivity to their needs" (ADIZES, 2000, p.168), and so there is a tendency to attack the administration. [85]

Transition breeds obscurity. The new rules and norms have not yet become institutionalized, while the old are no longer valid. There is fluidity, and unclear or conflicting expectations; thus a sense of disorder results. It appears that by arguing, one can achieve more, and conflicts arise which can lead to very emotional responses, as related by the students. [86]

The theory of the life cycle by ADIZES (2000) investigates how organizations and systems change during their life cycle, as do human beings. "Every time an organization moves from a certain stage in its life cycle to another, difficulties arise. In order to learn new patterns of behavior, the organizations must abandon the old patterns" (Ibid, p.31). These changes cause circumstances that "are likely to be opportunities or problems" (Ibid, p.25). [87]

One may ask how, with the aid of this research, can we transform more of the changes into "opportunities," rather than "problems." [88]

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