



## Love and critique in guiding student teachers

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### Abstract

The aim of this article is to show how the notions of love and critique have become an important source for changing practice in guiding student teachers and forming a foundation for my living theory (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002; 2006). Together with my colleagues in the postgraduate teacher-education programme at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences I have been engaged in an action research process concerning the question, 'How can I/we improve my/our practice?' (Whitehead, 1989). The emphasis has been on our role as supervisors. We wanted to explore and improve our guiding of student teachers, both the face-to-face and online guiding-practice. According to Skagen (2007) there is a lack of empirical research in the field of guiding as a practical activity. The aim of this project was to improve our practice as teacher educators and at the same time contribute to further development of theory in the field of teacher-education. Our own learning as well as our influence in students' learning were explored. We shared stories of guiding experiences in face-to-face encounters, and by reading each others' texts of guidance written when the encounter was online. Individually, and as a group, we reflected upon our own experiences as well as the shared stories and texts. Through these action-reflection cycles (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) the notions of love and critique emerged as expressions of values we considered important, not only in our guiding of the students but also when encountering each other as co-workers.

**Keywords:** Teacher-education; Guiding; Supervision; Action Research; Love; Critique; Living Theories.

## a) Love and critique

First I will try to clarify what I mean by love in student-guiding and explain why I have coupled the notion of love with the notion of critique. Peck (1998) defines love as ‘the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth’ (p. 81). When our group of teacher educators started to focus on our guiding practice, by devoting full-day meetings to the purpose of sharing and discussing our practices, we became aware that we shared a common basis for our work that mainly coincides with Peck’s definition. In various ways we all expressed that we strive to guide the students in ways that may nurture their growth as whole persons. Colleague Erling Krogh puts it this way: ‘The aim is to support and challenge each student teacher to reach her or his potential as a teacher’. Buber (in Atterton, Calarco, & Friedman, 2004, p.15) explains ‘spirit’ as ‘the totality which comprises and integrates all man’s capacities, powers, qualities and urges’. He further states that human wholeness does not exist apart from a real relationship to others. It is this development of wholeness that is the vision of our guiding-practice. I choose to use the notion of personal growth, with the content of Buber’s understanding of spirit, when I use Peck’s definition of love as a basis from which to define love in education as ‘the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s professional and personal growth’.

Buber (1937) phrases it beautifully when he separates love from feelings and says that ‘feelings dwell in man; but man dwells in love’(p. 19). He says further that:

... in the eyes of him who takes his stand in love, and gazes out of it, men are cut free from their entanglement in bustling activity.<sup>1</sup> Good people and evil, wise and foolish, beautiful and ugly, become successively real to him; that is, set free they step forth in their singleness, and confront him as Thou. (ibid.)

I believe that love enables us to see the other as Buber expresses here. In “I and Thou” Buber establishes the notions of what he calls two primary words: I-it and I-Thou, and he says that the primary word of I-Thou establishes the world of relation; whereas the world as experience belongs to the primary word I-it. So when I use the notion of I-Thou it means that I want my relationship with ‘the other’ to have the relational quality I understand Buber to describe in the primary word I-Thou. I do not want to reduce the other to my experience of her or him. The ideal aim is to see the other from a ‘stand in love’, and thus see the other more fully as he or she really is. This is our responsibility as humans. Responsibility towards the ‘otherness’ of the other is what Levinas claims is the very essence of our being (Levinas, 1991; Moran, 2000). According to Levinas responsibility is a form of recognition. ‘This recognition is not a cognitive act, that is, an identifying, re-presenting, re-cognizing act. It is effected in expressive acts by which one expresses oneself, expresses one’s being, exposes oneself to the other’ (Levinas, 1991, p.xix).

How does it manifest itself then when we see each other and recognize each other? And with what actions do we support each others’ growth? I consider affirmation and

<sup>1</sup> I find the Norwegian translation captures a different sense of this statement when it says that ‘men are cut free from their infiltration in the bustling life’. (Buber & Simonsen, 2003, p.16)

support to be important actions. But with an increasing awareness of the truth of the statement that it is in the 'process of meeting and solving problems that life has its meaning' (Peck, 2008, p.16), my understanding of the value of constructive critique has changed. I used to fear that my critique would hurt the student and cause pain, and thus tried to avoid any kind of direct critique. Through the process of self inquiry for my Ph.D. I have learned to see opportunities for growth where earlier I only saw problems. I believe this shift in my own attitude makes a difference in the way I deliver the critique, as I no longer feel sorry for the student, but rather grateful that areas of possible growth have emerged and caught our attention. So I see critique as one aspect of love that is necessary in order to be able to nurture the growth of another. Constructive critique is included in love as love seeks to see the other and influence the other's learning and development.

By critique, I mean examination and evaluation, for instance of a text written by the student, that holds the potential to be received and become nourishment for development and improvement. Biesta (2006) discusses how learning might be looked upon as response rather than acquisition of knowledge. By responding to what is different, challenging or irritating, he argues that we show who we are and what we stand for. In this sense I believe that constructive critique may contain a challenging value that holds the potential of growth and development, as it may form the basis for responding.

One aim of our guiding practice may then be expressed with Biesta (2006) when he says that:

education is not just about the transmission of knowledge, skills and values, but is concerned with the individuality, subjectivity, or personhood of the student, with their 'coming to the world' as unique, singular beings'. (p. 27)<sup>2</sup>

I have experienced myself that having the values of love consciously present, represented in the notions of love and critique, helps me develop my practice in a desired direction. It is therefore the notions of love and critique I consider to be tools, not love itself. And in choosing the expression *tool* it is with the idea that tools have the potential to extend humans' ability for action. The tool may become an extension of body or mind. Polanyi (1983) claims that we start to inhabit the tool, just as we inhabit our clothes and our body. The notions of love and critique have extended my awareness of guiding situations in ways that I think have improved my guiding practice.

Love at work has been elaborated by authors such as Church (2004), Lohr (2006), Tian and Bogner (in Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). Their work has been highly inspirational in my own continuing search for ways of inquiring into my practice from a vantage point of love.<sup>3</sup>

Laidlaw (2004) writes: 'I see myself as acting in the name of education and being in the loving service of humanity' (p.3). I find this statement beautiful. It expresses how I too wish to live and think about my life. I say this in the humble knowledge of often living in contradiction with the values embedded in the statement.

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<sup>2</sup> I.e., coming to the world as unique, singular beings.

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Whitehead and Laidlaw for directing me to their work.

Lohr (2006) has accounted for how she wants love actively to influence the way she works with others, and how she wants to be an instrument of love at work. In this article I will try to show how our group of colleagues, through lived experience, has come to understand acts of love in guiding student teachers, or rather how love is being expressed through our practice. And I will explore how I can be an instrument of love when guiding student teachers. Does it show that I want to see the students as they really are? I will start this exploration by telling a story of an encounter with my supervisor Edvin Østergaard, after a concert in which his music was played.

## **b) Being supervised – a reservoir for inquiry**

The guiding relationship between me and my Ph.D. supervisor has become an important source of inquiry and improvement. During the first year of our inquiry we had a disturbing encounter regarding my work. I felt he was not supporting me when he questioned the quality of the project with all our colleagues present. That was how I interpreted his statement. I decided to address the problem in a guiding session, as the sense of being undermined started to have a negative effect on our relationship. After the guiding session I made the following entry in my journal:

When he questions whether we are doing research or not, it is an expression of his critical eye. And it is meant to be constructive. To me it is frustrating, but I realize that it is a driving force for the process ... It feels like we have come closer during the session'. (March 15, 2007)

This experience made us both realize that reflecting on our guiding relationship was closely related to analyzing guidance-competency in regard to the students. The two roles of being a supervisor and being supervised came together. The guiding relationship had developed into a relation of mutual learning. Next I will invite you into a situation in which the roles were switched; I was in a criticizing position and my supervisor on the receiving end.

### **i) 'The 7th corner of the earth'**

My supervisor Edvin, is not only a pedagogic researcher, he is also a composer of contemporary music. Edvin has won awards for his music, and I regard him highly as a person and as my supervisor. I attended a concert where his music was played: "The seventh corner of the earth". Despite the awards, this kind of modern music is not my 'thing'. I don't understand it, and listening to it does me no good – this I knew. Why, then, did I choose to attend the concert? One reason was I still felt it was a way of showing my respect for his work. I admire his dedication and creativeness, I realize he is so much more than the person I usually see at work and I wanted to get to know him better.

The concert was set in a church. I was curious – what would I hear? I was completely unprepared for the impact this one hour of music would have on my body. It was so strong, it was actually painful. I include 6 sound-tracks from the concert<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> [Die 7 Himmelrichtung](#), [Meditation I](#), [Meditation II](#), [Meditation III](#), [Meditation IV](#), [Meditation V](#)



**Figure 1.** Photographs from the concert. The musicians are: Siri Torjesen (singer), Morten Carlsen (viola) and Hans Josef Groh (cello) (Photograph by Ødeby, Ann Iren, <http://www.anniren.no/>)

My realisation of my ignorance and failing ability to understand this kind of art is evident. Therefore I did not think I was in a position to give an informed evaluation at all, but I wanted to be able to praise his work. I was not able to do that and only greeted Edvin after the concert by asking if he was happy with the performance. I decided to talk with him later, and ask about his thoughts and motivations.

Then what happened? Over lunch a few days later a colleague, Linda, asked me: ‘How did you like the concert?’ I remembered my promise to myself not to speak of it before I had talked to Edvin, but despite this, all of a sudden I found myself telling of the painful impact the music had made on my body. Edvin entered the room and I started all over again. The impact on me had been strong and the words that I used were strong too. I did not intend to criticise his work (as I did not think of myself as being in a position to do that). He had not asked for my reaction, the others had. Still I offered a straightforward and honest description of how my reactions to the music had been – quite raw really. My intentions of having an inquiring and humble encounter were forgotten. I became aware that he might not appreciate my story although I could not read any discomfort in his attitude.

## ii) Living and contradictory values

Afterwards a lot of questions came to mind. I wondered if I had encountered my colleague and supervisor with love and respect. In Levinas’ terms, had I been responsible towards his ‘otherness’? Edvin had rendered himself vulnerable, into his being, through the music. Did I make myself vulnerable in my response to him? Was I meeting him in Buber’s terms of the ground-word ‘I-Thou’ – a relationship that is open, present, direct and mutual? Was I engaged in a genuine dialogue in which I was ‘experiencing the other side’ (Buber, cited in Atterton et al., 2004)? Did I live my values as expressed here? I did not think so, after the encounter.

My intention was to listen to Edvin, to have him explain to me what he wanted to express through the music, to learn how he works with it. With an open mind, maybe I would be able to learn to listen in a different way. With an open mind I might broaden my horizons. I felt like a living contradiction (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006)! Or was I actually offering critique that could be valuable? Maybe, but Edvin had not asked for it, and I did not offer it in the way I had planned.

Similar processes can take place in guiding student teachers. I say that I want the students to become aware of who they are and want to be as teachers, and support their development as best I can. Offering critique that might become valuable is challenging. The intended message is not necessarily the one received by the student. This is even more challenging when the guiding is written and given by e-mail, than when it is delivered face-to-face. In order to try to establish a dialogue, we encourage the students to reply to our guiding texts, so that we might learn about the effect our message has on them but they seldom do.

Through the project-period in general, and after the encounter with Edvin in particular, I started thinking more consciously about my intentions in guiding. Important issues to address might be:

- What values are the students living or wanting to live in their practice?
- What is it that they try to achieve through their practice?
- How are they trying to overcome their uncertainties?
- What are the steps towards their particular teacher-role?
- How might I support them on their way?

These questions seem important to tie in with the more detailed didactic or pedagogic issues that we emphasize in guidance. The didactic questions apply to the level of content in guidance, whereas the value-questions are more directed towards the personal level.<sup>5</sup>

The intention is not to impose values but to facilitate the grounds from which the students become aware of their own values. This will enable them to make conscious choices in their practice. One example of how I addressed values in guiding, after these questions surfaced, can be shown in this response from a student when she reflected on her work and the guiding she had received:

I received a question in the commentary to my finished assignment, which I found interesting to reflect upon. Sigrid...wrote as follows: 'maybe some of your values are being expressed when you say that 'it should be possible to work on a more advanced level with this class as well..' How would you express the values which are the basis for this statement?' I think it is right that this is an expression for an ethical principle, namely that all human beings benefit when faced with demands within limits of their mastering. And that even pupils with special needs are not without intellectual capacity even if they find it hard to deal with theoretic subjects. (H., log, February, 2008<sup>6</sup>)

Another question that emerged was quite disturbing; was I being supportive of a plurality of teacher-roles or was I looking for and supporting only a variety within narrow borders mirroring my own values and experiences, in the same way as I appreciate only a certain variety of music? This is a question I will not try to answer in this paper. But Elliot (1991) says that the improvement of practice consists of realizing those values which

<sup>5</sup> These two dimensions of guidance are discussed for instance by Pettersen and Løkke (2004).

<sup>6</sup> All student-texts as well as quotations from colleagues are translated by Gjøtterud unless otherwise stated.

constitute its ends, because in that realization the possibility for change is embedded. Thus change of practice was and is embedded in the question.

Before elaborating the notions of love and critique in guiding student teachers further, I will clarify the research design of the project and outline the background of the chosen focus.

### **c) Co-operative action research in our group of teacher educators**

The design of the project is reminiscent of that described by Heron and Reason (2001) in their article “The Practice of Co-operative Inquiry: Research ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ people”<sup>7</sup> in which they emphasize four phases of co-operative inquiry cycles. I will describe the design as well as try to give glimpses into the overall process of our project.

In the first phase the group of co-researchers decides to explore an agreed area of human activity. Our teacher-group decided to explore our guiding practice in order to improve it. This decision was built on data from an inquiry following the students’ first assignment in their first semester<sup>7</sup> (January 2005). We asked the students to reflect on how they had benefited from the guiding from co-students and from the teachers in writing the assignment. We also asked how they reacted to, and benefited from, the final evaluation of their work. They handed us their written account of these reflections. As we spend quite a bit of time writing texts of guidance and evaluation it seemed important to get to know more about the students’ reactions rather than what became evident just from the assignments themselves. The accounts revealed that overall the students expressed satisfaction with the guiding they had received; they said they became confident essay-writers. Here is one example: ‘The guiding was concrete and it helped me to proceed. I feel you were professional, but that you see the individual too – that there is room for being different.’ This was what we wanted, but many students said they had been too late in asking for guiding. And there was the significant fact that only a few of the students mentioned that the writing had helped them become more confident in their teacher-role, not only as assignment writers. This example is representative: ‘I realized how PPE (Practical Pedagogic Education) wants such assignments to be written.’ On the background of this inquiry we agreed that we needed to improve our guiding practice.

In phase two the co-researchers also become co-subjects. We were subjects of the inquiry as we engaged in the cycles of action-planning, action and reflection and as we documented the processes and the outcome of our exploration of practice. During the project-period (2005–2008) we had regular meetings in which we shared the focus each of us had chosen for learning and development through the guiding period. Furthermore we agreed on research-tasks for ourselves such as writing and sharing reflecting notes, sharing guiding texts, writing up narratives from guiding visits to students in practice etc. These documented tasks became our data. We met for in-depth discussions concerning all levels of

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<sup>7</sup> The teacher programme is organized as a full-time study for one year, or a part-time study for two years.



our practice but with a main focus on the guiding of the first assignment the students are given during their first semester.

In phase one the members become immersed in their actions and experiences. This is when we were engaged in the guiding and teaching, observing our own actions and reflecting on them individually, in collaboration with each other and in collaboration with the students. The notions of 'Love and Critique' in guiding were first presented in a reflection-note from my colleague and supervisor Edvin (Østergaard, 2006). I will get back to this later.

Phases two and three are repeated cycles. Each one addresses the same issue to make improvements, or one chooses a different aspect. We decided to keep a focus on our guiding primarily tied to the students' first assignment over the three-year cycles of our project; but more and more we became aware of different guiding settings and brought experiences from these into our discussions as well. Guiding during visits to students' teaching in their practice-school, and guiding a pedagogical development project which the students carry out in groups, are examples of other guiding tasks we brought into the project.

In phase four the group gathered to share experiences, and to look at them critically to see what had been learned and what we were learning by discussing the experiences. We came to conclusions about what changes were to be made in the teaching and organizing, as well as within the individual guiding practice. Changes in my guiding practice will be elaborated later. Here I will just give one example of how the project has affected teaching and organizing. As mentioned above it was through analyzing the first assignment that we realized that we did not encourage the students to reflect on their practice in the way we intended (journal-entry, September 2004). The didactic<sup>8</sup> assignment is about describing and reflecting upon a teaching situation from the students' practice in school. We want them to reflect on their influence on the pupils' learning, as well as their own learning, from reflecting upon the specific teaching situation. The aim is that they will get used to reflect on their practice, and thus become reflective practitioners as Schön (1995) emphasizes. However, as very few students stated that working on the text had made any positive contribution to their professional competency, we first changed the guidelines in a way that encouraged the reflection we wanted them to be engaged in. Second, we needed to change the content of our teaching. For instance we needed to address questions of pupil involvement at an earlier stage, and more specifically than before.

During the period of writing the students were organized in writing groups on the internet, where they are encouraged to guide each other. Over two days they started this process on-campus, in a writing-course. The above mentioned inquiry revealed that only a few students had actually engaged in the groups prior to the project. So a third change was the time of the third gathering on campus in order to allow the students to cooperate in writing-groups for a longer period of time than before. For years the students had complained that the third week-gathering on campus was too late for them to fully achieve the benefit of the writing-course and cooperation in writing-groups. Why did it not cross our mind earlier to change the time? It was so easy to do something about it, yet it did not

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<sup>8</sup> Didactics understood as 'practical-theoretical planning, carrying out, evaluation and critical analyses of teaching and learning (Hiim & Hippe, 1989, revised edition 1998, p. 99).



happen until we systematically documented the students feed-back and held it together with other data. By forming writing-groups before they started writing, by improvements of the writing course and by altering the time of the gathering, and also by further encouragement from the teachers, the participation and outcome of the writing-groups has increased during the project (Strangstadstuen, 2007).

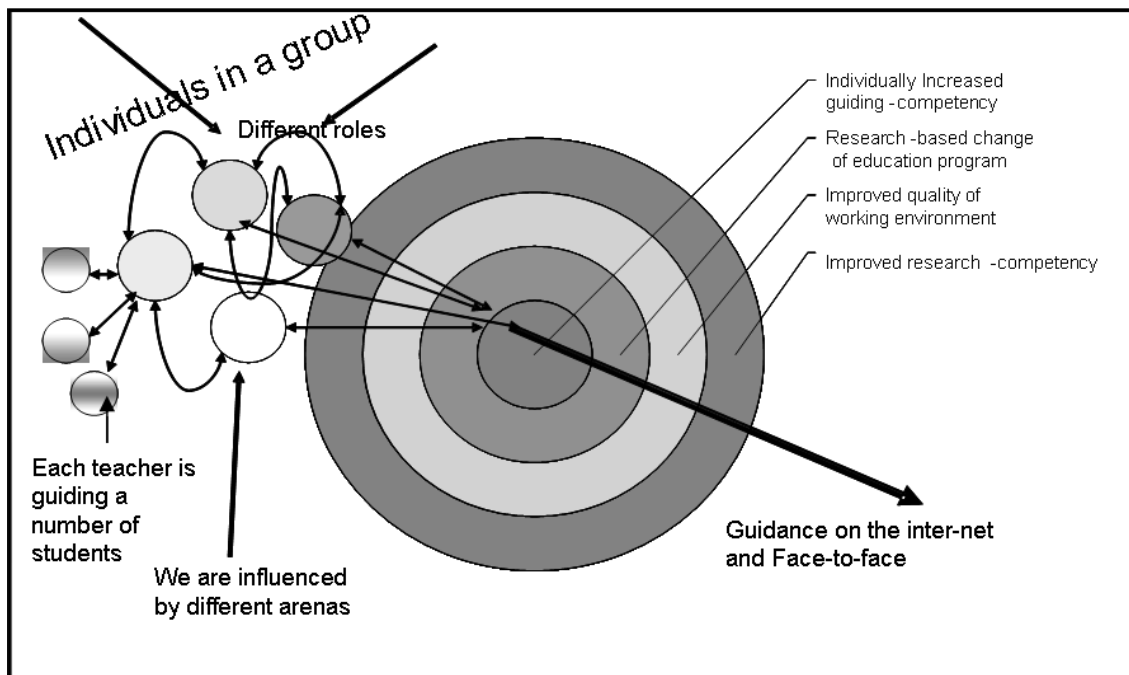
The design of the project is a dynamic process of co-operative action research, and individual research concerning the question 'how can I improve my practice?' as elaborated in Whitehead and McNiff (2006). Carr and Kemmis (1986) claim that this dialectic of individuality and society, as well as of theory and practice, 'is at the heart of action research as a participatory and collaborative process of self-reflection' (p. 184). Individual experiences were discussed and analyzed in the group. Shared values were being expressed and recognized as well as the individual values and skills which were being laid out. What I learned from each of the others became evident. My own contributions also were made visible. Later I will present a story of how Erling guided a student in a way I had never done, and how I learned from that. I will also present two stories of my own guiding to show examples of how I think my guiding has developed.

The roles of the group-members differed throughout the project. I was conducting the project as it was also my Ph.D. project. Two of my colleagues who were active in the project were at the same time my supervisors (Edvin and Erling). Solveig was my closest co-worker. She developed her own project within the frames of this project. As already mentioned she introduced new methods for student-collaboration and guiding between them on our learning management system. Seven other colleagues were involved in the project, some for the full period and others for parts of the period as they were hired during the project period, or they were on leave and came back.

Figure 2 below is an illustration of the participants and their different roles as described above. It is not an accurate account of the various relationships, but the intention is to show that some were more engaged in the process than others, everyone had their guiding relationships with their students and we were all influenced by other people and situations that cannot be tied to the project. The layered circle intends to describe how we have experienced change in four different areas of our work. I have briefly mentioned the second area, how the research caused changes in the course-work and this will be elaborated later in the article. How the work affected our working environment will not be discussed in this article, and I just want to say here that our capacity for doing action research has increased. Before this project no-one in our section was doing educational action research, at the end of the project there are at least three other active projects in our section. One of them is a state-funded project called 'Elev-forsk'<sup>9</sup>, or 'Pupils'-research'. In the following I will focus on the individual level of change, my own development as a student teacher guide.

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<sup>9</sup> Information about the project: <http://studentresearch.umb-sll.wikispaces.net/>



**Figure 2.** An illustration of co-operative and first-person inquiry in dynamic processes with colleagues and with students, and the four areas of change we experienced during and because of the project

When we are doing action research we draw on the Stenhouse (1975) tradition and John Elliot's pragmatic theory in the sense that we, by our research, hope to contribute useful theory for teacher-education practice and other professional educations, as the purpose is to improve practice in a wider range than just our own. Hiim (2003, 2007) claims that research and knowledge-development based in the practical work, in the occupational functions, is necessary in order to develop relevant professional concepts. This has encouraged our research.

Living theories (Whitehead, 1989, 2008, March; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006) form a second basis for the work, as we make an effort to make our values as educators explicit and make an attempt to live and change our practice in accordance with the expressed values by which we want our work to be judged. We create our own living educational theories, in the hope that it may act as a contribution to educational epistemologies. By this I mean that I hope that these narratives of my struggle to create my living theory 'may be of value in the generation of your living theories as we combine our voices in enhancing our educational influences in improving our local and global contexts' (Whitehead, 2008, p. 118).

Winters' (1989) six principles for conduct of action research; reflexive critique, dialectic critique, collaborative resource, risk, plural structure and theory-practice transformation made up a basis for choice and the interpretation of data. I hope I have been able to show this through establishing the context for the inquiry, by questioning my own practice and finding possibilities for change within these questions, by showing how we have contributed to each others growth as teachers and guides, by risking the revelation of my self, by showing a plural structure by revealing my colleagues' and students' own voices, and

by choosing diverse cases to show my processes. Lastly I have documented this process in an attempt to theorize my lived experience.

#### d) Guiding teacher students with love and critique – changed practice

When the notions of love and critique emerged, the terms reverberated with my intentions and values, and became important tools for analyzing and improving my practice. Oestergaard (2006) uses the expression: ‘the loving and critical eye’ whereas for me it was about the loving and critical encounter (Buber, 1937). With the notion of love and critique present in my mind I suddenly recalled all the discussions we had had during the project-period, as well as before, and it became evident that we had a shared value of love for our work and for our students. We really want the students to achieve to their full potential, within the framework provided by the [Education Act](#), [Core Curriculum](#), [subject Curricula](#) and [National curriculum regulations for teacher-education in Norway](#). Later I will draw some lines of the framework provided by these documents.

Below I have made a chart (Figure 3) in which I have tried to capture what it is we are doing in order to guide the students towards their potential. The statements are derived from accounts from project-meetings and are also my interpretations of what I have seen in texts of guiding. This chart was made in the middle of our process.



**Figure 3:** Statements drawn from concrete actions in guiding student teachers

We continue the work of conceptualizing our practice in this sense. I have highlighted a few notions; first 'I want the best for you' which everyone in the group has stated; and attention and awareness I believe is a basis for guiding in general. 'I will show you', 'I seek you out' and 'the goal is for you to have a clearer view of yourself' are highlighted because I want to present three cases, showing where these statements came from. These stories represent some aspects of what has come out of the process of identifying what we are doing that I believe qualifies as encounters of love and critique.

### **i) The benefit of working with texts**

After showing the chart above to my group of colleagues in a project-meeting, Solveig concluded by saying: 'What it comes down to, is to take the time to go a second round' (personal communication, October 22, 2007). This is possible when working with texts, but not the same when it comes to face-to-face encounters. For me the second round is about going over my feedback text to see if I have affirmed the work of the student by showing how I have tried fully to understand his or her aims: if I have said what I think is positive about the text and/or the content of the text and if I have asked meaningful questions that have the potential of challenging the student in a desired way. I will get back to what I mean by 'a desired way' later. My first reaction to a text is almost always on the critical side:

- Is the text structured?
- Were the aims of the pupils' learning clear?
- Had the student planned how to evaluate the learning-outcome for the pupils?
- Did the teaching involve the pupils? Was the content of the teaching relevant to the pupils?

These are all important didactical aspects in my opinion. But I have discovered through this inquiry that if I don't go through the text a second time, the critique may become overwhelming, or the praise may not be specific enough. Or if the text is positive there may not be challenging enough questions or comments to encourage further work and development. One student entered a statement in the log that many of our students over the years have pointed to:

It was unbelievably wonderful that we were given such a long and thorough evaluation. One feels happy when the positive aspect is so focused. But a few hints on what one might improve in the next assignment would have been welcome. (Log, January 11, 2008)

One of my colleagues (Hans Petter Evensen) claims that: 'It is unbelievable how many compliments a person can take'. However, it has become increasingly evident to me that it is just as important to provide the challenge necessary for growth.

What, then, is the desired direction of development for the student teachers? I will turn to curricula and acts regulating educational policy in Norway to answer that question. The Core Curriculum (Ministry of Education Research, 1993) states that:

The point of departure for schooling is the personal aptitude, social background, and local origin of the pupils themselves. Education must be adapted to the needs of the individual. Greater equality of results can be achieved by differences in the efforts directed towards each individual learner. (p.5)

Furthermore, the National curriculum regulations for teacher-education in Norway (Ministry of Education and Research, 2003) states that:

If children are to maintain and further develop the desire to learn and believe in their own mastery, the teacher must have the ability to actively include the children, parents/guardians and colleagues in the educational work. (p.1)

One aim of guiding, then, is to point the students' actions and attitudes in the direction of detecting the individual needs of their pupils and encourage their efforts in planning teaching in order to meet their needs and involve the learners in the learning process.

In the Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education: Education Act: "Education Act" (Norwegian Ministry of Education Research) it is made clear that teachers have an important role in securing for children positive learning-environments:

The school shall make active and systematic efforts to promote a satisfactory psycho-social environment, where individual pupils can experience security and social ties. If any school employee learns or suspects that a pupil is being subjected to offensive language or acts such as bullying, discrimination, violence or racism, he or she shall investigate the matter as soon as possible and notify the school management and, if necessary and possible, intervene directly. (p. 23)

This, too, is an aim of guiding, to read the students' texts and 'listen' to their stories from practice, and to observe them in school-practice, so that we might be able to detect students who do not treat their pupils with respect and 'open their eyes' to what is going on in the learning environment. The hope is that the assignments will set off reflection-processes that will increase the students' ethical awareness and make them realize their important, educational role in society. This is not achieved during the first assignment, which is emphasized in this article, but the intention is for the process to start at the beginning of the course.

These are just a couple of examples of what I mean by the development of competency in a desired direction. I hope this provides a glimpse into the context of the inquiry, and also how the notion of love and critique has pointed my attention towards new aspects for guidance. Further I will present three student-cases; each elaborating specific aspects of the terms love and critique. But first I will account for how I made the choice of particular cases.

## ii) Choice of cases

All three cases are of students who finished in the second year of the action research project<sup>10</sup>. When I started writing this paper the third year had just started and it was too early to choose a case from that class. I think each narrative represents new aspects of my practice compared to the first year. I wanted one case to show how my learning has been influenced by my colleagues' guiding practice. That is case one. This case is mainly concerned with online guiding. Then I wanted to show my own development. Case two has little to do with online guiding whereas case three was concerned with online guiding as well as face-to-face encounters. The three stories then describe a variety of guiding contexts. Case one and three are tied to the first assignment I have focused on in the study. Case two and three are examples of how I felt my awareness of the students seemed to increase as a result of the conscious attention I paid to my practice when constantly asking; 'how can I improve what I do?', and keeping the notions of love and critique living in my mind. As with the challenging encounter and important relationship with Edvin, these three relationships seem significant to me as they represent quite different challenges in my practice. Every student is my concern, but we have delegated the responsibility of primary contact with the student teachers between us, and I have chosen the cases within the group of students for whom I was responsible for guiding throughout the year.

Unfortunately I do not have videos to show the interactions. Whitehead (2007, 2008) is concerned with how visual narratives can communicate living standards of judgement (Laidlaw, 1996). I see that it would have been very powerful and useful indeed. As it is, I will have to trust that the written accounts from the students and myself will be lively enough to create reliable images to show my standards of judgement.

Each case will be presented by an outline of what seemed to be the challenge or problem, then an account of how the challenge was dealt with, and what I learned from each case. For these purposes I have retrieved statements from the students in the following accounts:

- Student journals made official through our Learning Management System;
- the first assignment;
- the final reflection notes<sup>11</sup> and,
- written guiding texts.

<sup>10</sup> I thank the three students very much for letting me use their names. After having written the cases they have read and commented on the accounts.

<sup>11</sup> For the final, oral exam in pedagogy the students prepare themselves by writing their reflections on their own learning and development during the teacher-education process, expressing their competency as teachers at the end of the education process.



### iii) I will show you – case one

Some students have little training in writing. The reasons for the lack of skills vary. Some students have not written much at all or they are out of practice due to years of practical work. Working in the forest does not require much writing. Others come from a scientific tradition in which personal opinions or feelings are not to be expressed. From time to time it has caused me a lot of thought and frustration trying to help such students understand how they might write a coherent text. Prior to this project I thought the best way to meet the student was by asking questions and through that facilitating the grounds for the student to discover his or her own way. This practice is based on a reflection model for guiding student teachers (Handal & Lauvås, 1999; Lauvås & Handal, 2000). But I have experienced that sometimes this induces feelings of inferiority, of not being in control, rather than mastering and confidence.

When sharing guiding texts, as we did during the project period, I discovered that my colleague (Erling Krogh) showed a student, Jon, how to write. Jon had a long history of working at a school-farm and had little practice in writing. From what the student had written, which was not lengthy, Erling led him through each part of the assignment from start to finish, referring to the student's text, like this:

The plan for the teaching, using the six didactic categories, including your reasons for the learning goals of the pupils; why should the pupils learn this? Start by describing the didactic relational model and each of the six categories. Refer to Hiim and Hiippe (Hiim & Hippe, 1989, revised edition 1998) as sources. Then you start by describing the goals for learning.

Knowledge-based goals: Your four first lines are knowledge goals;

Goals for skills: The next two sentences;

Goals for awareness/ attitude: The two last sentences. (Text of guiding, 2005)<sup>12</sup>

At the end of the finished assignment Jon reflected:

The first time I heard about this assignment I shivered in fright and started to cold-sweat. Just writing this many pages was a challenge to me. I, who am only used to practical work. First I had to learn how to learn, and that was bad enough. I told myself: This is not going to work!! It was like running into a wall!! - one that I thought I would not be able to break through. But as time has passed and I gained more knowledge, I have slowly managed to break down the barriers ... The guiding worked fine. Erling Krogh has given me valuable knowledge and explained the assignment in an easier way so that I could understand. (Bjerke, 2005)

Jon further explains how the writing course<sup>13</sup> helped him become systematic in his writing, how learning how to use the computer helped him and how reading and

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<sup>12</sup> All texts from students and colleagues concerned in the presentation of the three cases are translated by me with the assistance of Linda Jolly.

<sup>13</sup> As part of the project Solveig Strangstadstuen has developed a writing-course in which the students learn how to start a writing or thinking process by short intervals of quick writing followed by changing texts in order to give each other feedback. This is the basis for forming writing-groups on our LMS (learning management system).

understanding new words and concepts helped him. After two years as a part-time student, in his final reflection-note Jon wrote:

First we learned how to write a log. What sort of thing is that? It was absolutely unknown to me. It has been of great value throughout the course, being able to write what you have experienced, felt, reflected on, learned and what the pupils have learned etc. Particularly the self-reflection and reflecting on the teaching and the pupils' learning was new to me. You were forced to think more and get the thoughts onto paper. This was tricky, especially for me who is not a theorist. It has caused me to become more aware, to ask myself more critical questions both as a person and as a teacher. (Bjerke, 2005)

From having the role as manager for the school's farm, Jon went into teaching. From experiencing writing an assignment as running into a wall, he ended up being able to phrase his reflections as shown above. His starting point was a feeling of frustration and fright. When he was shown how he could write, he was able to write, and he mastered the task. I realized that some students really benefit from being shown. I had not, prior to reading Erling's guiding text, considered showing or instructing like this. I did not want to subjugate my students to my advice in such a manner. But in this situation I experienced it as an act of love to show the student, and by that get him started, without the long and tiring detour of 'a million questions' intending to help him discover for himself. I regard this to be respecting the student and his point of departure.<sup>14</sup>

Does the 'showing' also contain constructive critique? My view is that the critique here lies in the student's opportunity to respond (Biesta, 2006, p. ix). The student may react to Erling's attempt at expressing his thoughts and start his own writing process from there. Erling's attempt may disturb him or actually resonant with his experience. It might be considered to be critique in the sense that it may help the student to see possibilities he did not see before. I think Jon's final reflections show that he was able to benefit from the advice and from that starting-point developed his thinking and learning.

#### **iv) I seek you out – case two**

When students were not making positive progress in their studies, or they met the challenges with indifference or hostility, I used to have problems confronting them in a constructive way. I have felt sorry for them, afraid of making matters worse, or I may even have felt annoyed that they did not appreciate what we offered. During the project-period I realized that these situations rather are wonderful opportunities for the student to grow, as well as for us to learn more about how the programme is experienced. I no longer fear facing the students, rather the opposite, I am curious. I have experienced that this shift in my attitude and my emotions provides for an open dialogue. As I am no longer feeling sorry for

<sup>14</sup> One condition for guiding via the internet is that we always meet our students face-to-face before starting the on-line guiding, for two weeks of on-campus gatherings. The second gathering is located outside the campus and most of the staff spends two to five days with the students in the mountains. We do this in order to establish relationships between the students as well as between students and teachers. Erling is careful about getting to know the students he is to guide. I consider this to be an important condition for the guiding as we can not observe the students' reactions when working on the computer and might therefore easily cause misunderstandings.

the student, nor in a position of defence, I think I am able to face the students in a different way, one that also encourages the student to see possibilities instead of just problems. It was through encounters like the one I will now describe here that caused this shift in my attitude to happen. When challenging my own feelings, the students' reactions showed me I was not making matters worse, but I was rather providing an opportunity for growth, and at the same time I learned something valuable for our teaching and guiding practice.

Guro is a young woman who had just finished her Master of Science degree. I observed Guro during classes. She looked bored and tired to me. She did not participate in discussions and often sat by herself in the classroom. In a mid-term evaluation one question concerned the students' evaluation of their own effort during gatherings, and there were three possible answers: average, below average or above average. Guro crossed out below average. She commented that the teaching was 'boring' because: 'I feel there are many words, that the important points are coming late and that there are few important points'. We asked further what changes they might suggest and she asked for 'more references to course-literature, more examples from everyday-life in school, and more notes ... on the most important points made.'

Prior to the project I would have felt bad for not being able to reach the student, and I would have left it at that. Now I realized this was an opportunity to learn something about our practice that we usually do not hear, and I hoped I could help the student develop a more positive attitude so that she could experience something valuable for herself. Therefore I invited her into a dialogue. I listened to her frustrations and asked what we could do to make matters better. She made some suggestions. One was that she needed to be challenged more. She felt the demands of the course were slack. During the year we had a few talks, I tried to challenge her in different ways, for instance by giving her more advanced reading material when she was working on her assignments. At the end of the year she wrote in her reflection-note:

This school-year I have experienced becoming terribly tired of school. This might give me better understanding of being a pupil and it is an experience I will bring with me. My learning lies in seeing the pupil(s), like I feel I have been seen. I became tired of school even with good teachers (thank you!), it was the system with school year after year that was too much for me, and this year as all other years it was the gatherings with all the sitting still that was too much. (Saurdal, 2007)<sup>15</sup>

She learned something valuable during the year that she might not have unless I had persistently invited her to talks. With this student the loving encounter was about seeking contact, not letting her become invisible as she might have been. My responsibility is to be aware of 'the other' and act on the observation. The evaluation mentioned earlier was anonymous, but I guessed it was hers and asked if that was right. This was the opening for the dialogue. Was that an ethically correct act? It was done with the intention of providing an opportunity for improving the situation, for showing her that her views were important, and that we could learn from her experiences. We were reminded how important it is to

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<sup>15</sup> It is not evident from this text that it was our encounters that made her feel seen, but she did say that during the oral exam.

differentiate teaching and guiding. She was not challenged by the discussions and reflections. To her the points were taken easily, it was all too evident; there was not enough substance to trigger her thoughts and feelings in fruitful ways. So she rightfully critiqued our teaching.

I also think that the persistence in seeking contact with her in the situation may be considered a kind of critique. I believe the encounters, the questions about what we and she might do in order to find meaning in the situation, held the potential for becoming nourishment for development and improvement.

### **v) The goal is for you to have a clearer view of yourself – case three**

The third and final aspect of love and critique that I will discuss in this paper has to do with evaluative praise and again persistence. Gitte had her education within ICT. I had guided her and written the final evaluation on her assignment. In my opinion she had delivered a well written text reflecting a brilliant way of teaching maths to eighth graders. I expressed this. The student in return expressed frustration both in her discussion-group and in a plenary discussion, as well as in the log handed in after having received the evaluation. In it she wrote:

As long as I agreed, I corrected the text based on the commentaries. That is, I disregarded the commentaries if I did not agree, or thought the comments were irrelevant to what I was trying to express. The final evaluation was so positive I did not believe it – not even now. I might accept a compliment, but I am awfully self-critical. This combined with low self-esteem, made the final evaluation seem totally improbable and I concluded that it was not true. This is not a criticism of the one who wrote it, but an indication that not everyone regards positive critique equally. (Gitte, Log, January 18, 2007)

After she had expressed these thoughts I invited her to a talk. I offered her a second opinion of her text by a colleague who is an expert at writing. A few days later she came to my door with a broad smile. She had started to believe in the praise. She had begun to change her view of herself from being a 'poor writer' to a student who could write interesting and lively texts. In her final reflection-note she wrote:

I came from one university to another, from a math-professor to an expert in pedagogy. It was indescribable! I thought I had lost my ability to learn, that I had gone both blind and deaf, until the first week at my new university had ended. The joy was enormous; once again I had found a teacher who contributed to my learning! Together with two math-teachers I have had previously; I would characterize these three as my best teachers through all my years as a pupil and student. They are my role models ... Their ability to motivate, their engagement, using the students' contributions, keeping it understandable, building on what is already known and not least their dialogue with the students, are some of the qualities I will bring into my own theory of practice – if I manage. (Mårtensen, 2007)

Prior to this project I would probably just have tried to convince her to believe in the praise, I would not have gone into the ongoing dialogue that was necessary for her in order to benefit from the praise. Engaging in the dialogue, providing a second opinion, providing a number of opportunities for talks are ways in which I believe I 'extended myself for the

purpose of another's growth'. One might say that the critique lay in the challenge to revise her self-regard.

I hope I have managed through these examples to show how the notions of love and critique have become tools for improving my practice, tools that have made a significant contribution to the analysis of practice and to action in practice. Through these examples I also hope to have shown how the statements in the chart above have been established through the collaboration within our group. Some of the statements come from my practice and others from my colleagues' practices.

Next I will point to how the action research project has influenced the students' choice of focus in their development project which they have to carry out as part of their coursework.

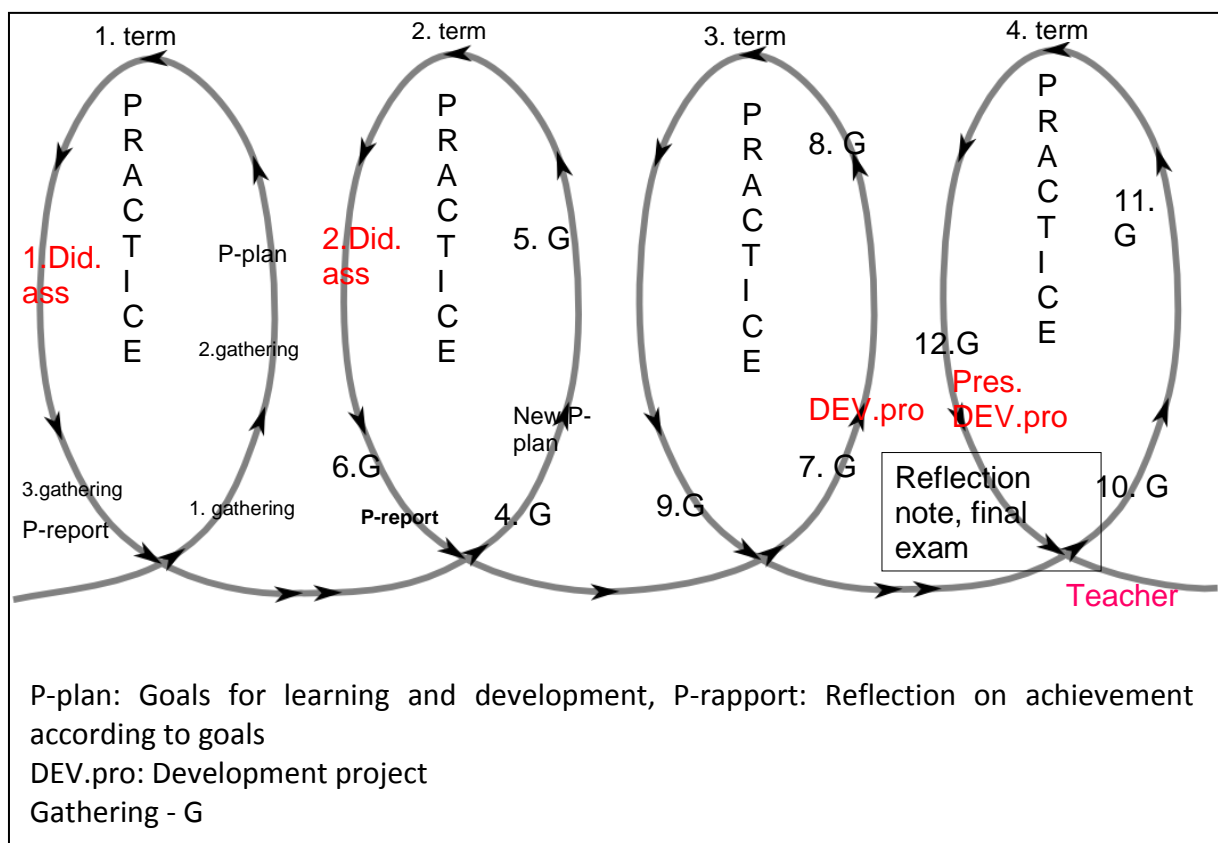
### **e) Student teachers developing their competency through action research**

The fact that the teacher-educator group put our practice up for inquiry led to another important shift in our education programme. Since we started the course in 1999 one main assignment for the student teachers has been a development project which they carry out in groups and work on through two semesters. They create their project within the frame of the curriculum's aims. One aim of this project is for the students to work on one of six competence described in the National Curriculum Regulations for Practical and Didactic Education (Ministry of Education and Research, 2003, p. 16): adaptive and developmental competence. Another aim of the assignment is for them to develop insights in working with this kind of inquiry learning so that they in their turn may become supervisors of their students in their processes of 'researching for learning' (Scardamelia & Bereiter, 1999).

Over the years, as a result of the development project, the students have developed learning games for science, guides on how to conduct meaningful teaching in science outdoors, how to deal with children's sorrow and how schools might improve their strategy for preventing or discovering use of drugs etc. Through the period of our project we have been able to encourage the students to inquire into their practice just as we have inquired into our practice. In the second year of our project there was one group who chose the question: 'how can I improve my practice?' as their project theme. In the third year there were five such groups. Each student in the group focuses on an area they want to improve, and the members seek to support each others improvement. Learning about guidance becomes an important result of the group-activity.

This approach has helped combine all the elements in the teacher-education in a new way, with closer links between practice and theory. The need for closing the gap between theory and practice in teacher-education in Norway has been emphasized in evaluations, the last one being at the beginning of this century (The National Council of College Education, 2002). Korthagen (2001) has outlined a strategy for what he calls a realistic approach. The main ideas in this approach are that teacher-education should build on concrete, practical problems and that the students need to learn how to reflect on such problems in order to develop professionalism as teachers. He stresses that the education programme needs a strongly integrated form.

The entire education program is now viewed as a development spiral in which each semester consists of gatherings on campus and online, practices in schools and assignments. (See Figure 4 below).<sup>16</sup> Every practice-period the students begin by working out aims for their own learning and development. This document is commented on and approved by a teacher. The topics of the gatherings, as well as the assignments, aim at supporting their work in practice-schools towards their attempts at achieving their goals. Each term ends with reflections that are summed up in an evaluation of the student's development in practice and thus starts a new plan for improvement for the next period in practice. This document is also commented and approved by the staff of the education program. In this way the entire program follows the cycle of plan, act and observe, reflect and new plan. This means that the students' plans (learning goals) and reports from practice (what is achieved) are no longer experienced as formal demands, but as dynamic processes they can use in their development. Some students, during classroom discussions when presenting the idea, said that these tasks now took on a whole new dimension. Their learning outcome from gatherings, their personal journals, the assignments – all could now be data in their development project.



**Figure 4:** The post master-teacher programme viewed as cycles of plan-act-reflect-plan, integration of theory and practice

<sup>16</sup> The discussion and decisions are documented in an account from a meeting December 20, 2006.



All the students attending the specific groups addressing the question: 'how can I improve my practice?' have, in various ways, documented how the project has helped them develop their own ability as teachers. One student told of the outcome of her first-person inquiry like this:

The most significant difference for me was that I came to class with more insight into the pupils, the relations between the pupils and between the pupils and me. On the other hand I knew less about what all the books said about the issue in question. (Skjæggestad, 2007, p. 10)

This student was inspired by an article called 'Living Life as Inquiry' by Judi Marshall (1999). She systematically wrote a journal during her work on the development project. She made some significant discoveries about her practice and she expressed how she developed a new confidence as teacher. All the students in that group accounted for how they made significant changes in their practice or in the way they regarded their teacher-role, in their project reports. When they presented the work for the rest of the class at the end of the year, one student commented by saying she wished she had been courageous enough to go into that group. She realized they had learned something that was valuable for them.

The described change of the development project, and how that altered our view of the entire programme, constitute a major result from the co-operative action research project.

## **f) Transformations emerging from the '7th corner for the world'**

'The 7th corner of the world' mirrors the seventh direction. The six commonly used directions are; north, south, east, west, upwards and downwards. The seventh is the direction pointing inwards. In this article I have explored and shared with you a few 'pictures' of lived experience; an encounter with my supervisor and three guiding situations with student teachers. These experiences were all informed by the notions of 'love and critique', just as the experiences added new aspects to the notions of 'love and critique'. The awareness of the notions helped improve practice and practice added new aspects of meaning to the notions. The inward change of attitudes makes change of practice possible, and change of ones practice may contribute to inwardly change.

The concert situation was not one of guiding, and still I consider it an important aspect of my practice – a situation from which it is possible to draw knowledge valuable for my guiding practice. This encounter shows me in a situation where I felt that my actions contradicted my values. As I reflected on the situation, I came to understand several things that I will form as five crucial elements of any guiding practice:

First it shows how easy it is to act in contradiction with one's intentions and values and how important it is to be conscious of the values one wants the work to be judged by. I want

- the students to succeed in order to become their potential (case one)
- to make an effort to provide a learning environment in which every student may be supported and challenged (case two)

- to provide a mirror for the students in order for them to discover their strengths (case three).

This awareness is what Reason and Heron (2000) describes as meta-intentionality. The awareness has prompted me to facilitate reflections where students may become aware of their values, and provide opportunities for them to discover when they act in contradiction to their values in teaching situations. Furthermore the awareness points to contradictions in my practice.

Secondly it shows the importance of preparation. Had I read what was written about the music and had I asked for Edvin's intentions before going to the concert, I might have been able to hear something different from what I actually heard and/or delivered the critique in a different manner. This also applies to my work with the students. Finding out what is important to them and exploring their experiences prior to entering the student-teacher role are important tasks belonging to the guiding role. Listening to Guro's experiences of what bored her during campus-gatherings, and why, was crucial in order to provide for a more satisfactory learning environment, one where she at least felt seen. New ways of differentiating teaching and guiding were revealed through that process.

The third point is about paying attention to the emotions in the situation in order to develop one-self. Paying attention to the time I critiqued Edvin's work and the emotions evoked turned out to be a valuable source for learning. I learned (again) that my feelings are strong and that I have to think twice about how I word them. Even though Edvin did not resent my reactions, I would have preferred to deliver them differently. I have gained new insight into how my emotions may become barriers for the learning of others and how they might help me engage in positive encounters even if the situation seems problematic (cases two and three). Kvalsund (2005) points out how important it is to work on personal growth and development to reach greater professionalism as supervisors.

Fourthly, the situation shows how working with and sharing emotions may be transformed to knowledge – knowledge that leads to richer experiences and 'fuller relationships'. Buber says: 'Only when I risk and reveal myself as she risks and reveals herself will I grasp her uniqueness and she mine' (cited in Atterton et al., 2004). The relationship with my supervisor was broadened through the experience as we both opened up and revealed ourselves. In the same way the relationships with the students broadened. Learning happened on several levels. Edvin works with the musicians in a more collaborative way after this encounter. I learned more about my values and how I want to address critique, as well as learning about the music. The changed relationship has given way to new areas of collaboration.<sup>17</sup>

The fifth point concerns language. Edvin addressed the issue of balance between support and challenge in guiding when he wrote:

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<sup>17</sup> On June 2, 2008, there was a gathering of leaders of Norwegian Teacher-education (NRLU) that our section hosted. For this gathering we (Edvin Østergaard, Knut Omholt and myself) created a one hour performance together with the three musicians playing parts of the concert (some of the pieces linked up earlier in this paper). The performance included the narrative of my experience, as described in this paper.

I began thinking (after the encounter following the concert) of love and critique in musical terms, as harmony/consonance and disharmony/dissonance. These are maybe the two most profound forces in musical composition, - only (or too much) harmony makes the expression dull, whereas only (or too much) disharmony is destroying for the ear and the mind. For the composer, it is crucial to be able to balance these to complementary forces. (E. Østergaard, personal communication, March 11, 2007)

In guidance it is also crucial to find the balance between harmony and disharmony (Laidlaw, 2008), between support and challenge. This is well documented in literature about guidance and supervision (for instance in Handal & Lauvås, 1999). Edvin here adds 'new' ways of thinking about this balance. When developing new ways to describe and understand our practice, at the same time the prospect of enhancing practice is being increased (Gudmundsdottir, 1997).

Lastly, I will summarize the outcome of the project that I have focused on in this paper. At the beginning I defined love as the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's professional and personal growth. The student examples I have chosen, I regard as representing situations when I have extended my self by crossing barriers in the purpose of nurturing both the students' professional growth and my own. What earlier disturbed me and felt like dissonance in student encounters is now experienced as consonance. There has been change of practice. The examples are further meant to show what I mean when I say I want to see the other in Buber's terms, being in a relation of I-Thou. I have pointed out a variety of challenges students may encounter and shown how they require an awareness to detect the points of challenge in each student, as well as the diverse approaches necessary to see each student's learning needs. This engages the outcome of the project on a personal level. Furthermore, I have shown how the project has influenced the organizing of the postgraduate teacher-education program, when the development-project took on the form of 'how can I improve what I do as a teacher student', and by that contributed to narrowing the gap between theory and practice in the program.

Finally I will now return to the encounter following the concert, in order to close this paper.

### **g) Living contradiction or living critique**

Now is the time to return to the question: did I live my values when I imposed my experiences on Edvin and my colleagues after the concert? My first answer was no! I was not following my intentions of an open inquiry where my aim was to understand his expression. On the other hand I was being present and direct, which Buber considers to be qualities of an I-Thou encounter (Atterton et al., 2004). I was exposing my own ignorance as well as my genuine emotions and bodily reactions. What were Edvin's reflections on this encounter? He answered this question in writing:

... you chose to give me your response in front of all our colleagues – which to me is a very secure surrounding. It has to do with the fact that you chose to wait several days before giving me your opinions. And it certainly has to do with being able to accept critique from an

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audience – this should be regarded as a composer’s key qualification! (E. Østergaard, personal communication, March 11, 2007)<sup>18</sup>

He also emphasized that this sort of lived critique was a rare experience as his fellow composers listen and give their feedback in a very different manner. In this situation the feedback was sudden and impulsive. The negative criticism was transformed into what he experienced as constructive critique. Mutual respect was a condition that made this transformation possible. And maybe even more important, we were both engaged in the reflections and awareness of how we live our values of love and critique and therefore were both willing to share the pain of vulnerability. A shared language in which to bring up the situation for reflection was available. It was a shared feeling of importance that made us take the time and effort for exploration. Personal experience was transformed to lived theory.

This was also the case in the three student situations I have described. The students were all willing to do some hard work in order to develop as humans and as teachers, and they were willing to let us partake in that process. There is always the possibility that some students go unnoticed, not being properly challenged. It is an aim to continue striving to see them all.

## **h) Conclusion**

New ways of thinking about our practice developed as we created new or different concepts to think with. The concept of love and critique informed our practice and brought awareness and consciousness to new areas of our guiding actions. The cycles of action and reflection clarified mine and our lived and contradictory values and pointed out possibilities for new action. I hope I have been able to show how my practice has improved and how I have influenced others’ learning by conducting this project with my colleagues and through my encounters with the students. I have not accounted for my colleagues’ developed competences, but it is important for me to underline that it was our practice that provided the grounds for, and was crucial for individual growth through the cycles of action and reflection. The project was for me an inspiration to live a life in inquiry (Marshall, 1999), continuing to develop my living theory.

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<sup>18</sup> This letter was written in English.

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