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*I believe the image is the greatest instrument of instruction. What a [person] gets out of any subject presented to him[sic] is simply the images which he himself [sic] forms with regard to it.* (Eilam, 2012, p. 219, citing Dewey, 1897)

The field of visual representation (VRs) — or visual imagery — to employ a less popular term, is replete with dualities. As Billie Eilam makes clear in her new book, dual functions and dual representations of visual images (or VRs as the author calls them) prevail in the field of education. The volume begins with a Preface that tells of

how VRs both direct and bound human thought, contributing to the images that subsequently form in human minds.

This opening leads to Part 1, Chapter 1, appropriately titled “Dualities of Visual Literacy: The Double-Faced Janus Image,” which brings into focus several twofold challenges: the intended/the unintended; the explicit/the implied; the stated curriculum/the null curriculum; the teacher as teacher/the teacher as learner; the teacher/the learner; and so forth. From there, readers proceed to Part 2, “The State of the Art in Visual Literacy Among Teachers and Students in Schools and Within Today’s Visual Culture,” which consists of four chapters ranging from “A Day in Teachers’ Work” (Chapter 2) to “The Emergence of Visual Literacy and the Global Visual Culture” (Chapter 5), with chapters on “Students’ Ideas About VRs Over Development” (Chapter 3) and “Practicing Teachers’ Ideas About VRs and Their Uses” (Chapter 4) appearing in-between.

Part 2’s chapter lineup is followed by two chapters that constitute Part 3. These chapters (Chapter 6: “The Rationale for Implementing Explicit Visual Education for Teachers; Chapter 7: “Integration of VRs into Teacher Education Programs: Past, Present, and Future”) give way to Part 4, “The Nature of VRs and Their Impact on Learning” and four more chapters having to do with perception (Chapter 8), symbolic language (Chapter 9), types and characteristics of visual representations (Chapter 10), and the affordances and constraints of learning and teaching with representations and multimedia (Chapter 11).

of the Future: The Visually Literate Teacher” (Chapter 17) is presented.

As readers are aware from this introduction, Eilam addresses a wide swath of content, processes and beliefs concerning VRs in her book. Given the breadth and depth of her chosen research topic and the invitational quality of her prose, it is little wonder that *Teaching, Learning, and Visual Literacy* has been nominated for a Grawemeyer Award in Education (2014). Most certainly, Billie Eilam, like other authors in contention for the prestigious prize, animates and disseminates ideas that have the power to significantly impact educational practices of preservice and in-service teachers both locally and globally.

Particularly profound about her work are the figures she has chosen as exemplars to make her key points. Excerpted from a wide variety of disciplines and reflective of Israel’s diverse cultures, these VRs communicate what Eilam discovered when she conducted empirical research studies in Israeli schools. One can imagine (visualize?) oneself encountering these VRs in similar classroom situations. One can picture teachers and students employing these visual images, making meaning alongside one another in mutual knowledge communities (Craig, 1995, 2007). Then, too, one can imagine conceptions and misconceptions taking shape around VRs dealing with content as diverse as (1) heart rate and exertion, (2) concepts and landscapes in geography, (3) a municipality’s structural hierarchy, and (4) earnings by gender. As each exemplar is unpacked, the daunting task of developing visual literacy competencies in teachers, teacher educators and students emerges.

For this reason, the focus of the remainder of this review will be placed on Billie Eilam’s VR framework for teacher education—which is groundbreaking in that it is the first of its kind in the field of education—and, finally, her image of the visually literate teacher. This two-prong approach, Eilam argues, ensures that preservice teachers, in-service teachers and teacher educators are sufficiently readied to deal with diverse learners in their classrooms and with complex content emanating from an increasingly digitalized, globalized world. Before digging deeply into these areas, however, it is important that the author’s general image of teaching first be presented. This image
forms the critically important backdrop to Eilam’s VR framework for teacher education and her image of the visually literate teacher.

From what has been shared thus far, one might erroneously deduce that Billie Eilam takes a technical rationalist approach to teaching, particularly since VRs frequently come in the form of visible and invisible curriculum materials. This was my grave concern when I was first invited to review this volume. I worried that I would find the technical rationalist nature of the book off-putting. However, this misconception could not be further from the truth. Eilam, following Shulman, subscribes to the Schwabian (1971) notion of teaching as an art. In this view,

Every art has rules but knowledge of the rules does not make one an artist. Art arises as the knower of the rules learns to apply them appropriately to the particular case. Application, in turn, requires acute awareness of the particularities of that case and ways in which the rule can be modified to fit the case without complete abrogation of the rule. (Eilam, 2012, p. 91, citing Shulman, 2004, p. 175)

Also underpinning Billie Eilam’s teacher education framework is her generative view of teacher knowledge—that is, as being built from “concrete situations…perceived, experiences…had, persons …met, plans…exerted, and…consequences…reflected upon” (Eilam, 2012, p. 220, citing Kessels & Korthagen, 2001, pp. 25-29), a perspective that mirrors beautifully Connelly and Clandinin’s (1985) view of teacher knowledge around which my own research program revolves. Furthermore, Dewey and Schwab form part of the conceptual frames of both Eilam’s and my work, despite my studies stemming from a different curriculum commonplace (Schwab, 1954/1978) than hers. So, despite my initial apprehensions, Billie Eilam’s stance sits comfortably alongside my own. With this background in place, the framework for a VR curriculum for teacher education that Billie Eilam advances will now be discussed.

Three sets of considerations frame Billie Eilam’s VR teacher education curriculum guidelines: (1) curriculum characteristics; (2) preservice and practicing teachers’ characteristics; and (3) teacher education milieu. First,
VR curriculum characteristics, according to Eilam, need to respond to known difficulties in international teacher education. Concurrently, they should strive to integrate theory and practice through working conceptually with practical tools in real-life settings and the meshing of different content areas, skills and terms. Second, Billie Eilam believes that the curriculum should apply current learning perspectives to VR instruction by (1) developing teachers’ adaptive expertise (i.e., provoking them to action/spurring them to connect content, skills and attitudes); (2) designing real-world tasks that are relevant to teachers and advances their reflective thought; and (3) promoting constructivism in such a way that teachers’ knowledge in the VR arena deepens and becomes increasingly public. She then instantiates her VR curriculum framework by explicating six tasks to develop teachers’ visual literacy as learners and eight tasks to develop teachers’ visual literacy as teachers.

At first, the teachers as learner tasks come across as “rhetoric of conclusions” (Schwab, 1960, p. 185), findings cut off from the inquiry contexts in which Billie Eilam created them. This initial misreading of my part arose from the wide range of material Eilam presented and her unavoidable need to impose order on it. My misconception, it seems, did not stem from Eilam’s overriding desire to be prescriptive. Upon closer examination, however, I was relieved to find that the chapter in question (Chapter 16) was titled Possible exercises and tasks. Further to this, each task was accompanied by a mini-“narrative of [i]nquiry” (Schwab 1962). These narratives of inquiry outlined how Billie Eilam arrived at her tentative conclusions concerning how her VR framework could be lived. These stories of experience unfurled in the midst of the visualization courses she taught to preservice teachers in an undergraduate degree program and experienced teachers in a master’s degree program. For example, where the teacher professional development as learners tasks were concerned, Billie Eilam expects preservice teachers to produce VRs for a particular purpose, based on data from non-VR representations. Then, a related task requires them to analyze their self-created VRs to ensure that the visual images adequately communicate the non-VR data. What I interestingly found in these two tasks were two very Schwabian notions. One was the attention Billie
Eilam paid to terms and her desire to ensure that these terms of inquiry were commonly understood by all in the particular preservice teacher cohort before the data was represented and analyzed. The second attribute closely aligning with Schwab’s scholarship was the way Eilam invited the preservice candidates to deliberate their personally produced VRs from the common non-VR represented material and to assess their strengths and weaknesses. In this way, learning became shared by the preservice teachers in a mutually beneficial way. Also, two important habits of mind were established in the process. The third task that caught my attention was Task 4. It required teacher candidates to integrate VRs into relevant course materials as learners. Here, Eilam confronted simplistic visual representations head-on. She openly asked teacher candidates to discuss what they hoped their VRs would accomplish and to lay these intentions alongside what their visual representations actually communicated.

Moving on to preservice teachers’ professional development as teachers, three tasks in particular stood out for me: (1) comparing teachers’ and students’ descriptions and interpretations of VRs; (2) examining what students learn; and (3) using VRs to promote teaching. Comparing teachers’ and students’ descriptions and interpretations appealed to me because it seemed like the self-knowledge cultivated in teachers as learners (the first set of tasks) was being taken up a notch and the same careful attention was now being afforded to students as learners within the teacher-student relationship. In Eilam’s manuscript, this task was aptly illustrated through a preservice teachers’ work function circle in the mathematics domain. Where the second aforementioned task was concerned, keen focus was placed on what students learn in terms of outcomes. In this instance, a history student did not understand the caricature his/her teacher had chosen to accompany a particular passage of text; hence, the young adult student was unable to make meaning of the VR’s historical content. The third task that captured my attention was the use of visual images to advance teaching. In Eilam’s view, this task can be achieved by (1) promoting in-depth familiarity with the instruction of a certain VR; (2) promoting instruction of particular content using VRs; (3) improving skills for evaluating students’ knowledge and understanding; and (4) using VRs to increase
communication among teachers and between teachers and students. Where the latter is concerned, Billie Eilam focuses on small groups of preservice teachers working together inside and outside of class time to develop their own “registers” (Lemke, 1990) with respect to VR use. Once again, the idea of individuals interacting in knowledge communities to refine each others’ knowledge came to mind. In the end result, Eilam admits that there are endless ways to develop teachers’ and future teachers’ visual literacy. Hence, the fact that the possibilities are limitless should encourage educators to constantly experiment with the creative representation of data and to aim for increasingly fine-tuned analyses that make sense to both teachers and students.

In the end result, Billie Eilam concludes Teaching, learning, and visual literacy: The dual role of visual representation with her vision of the visually literate teacher. Eilam states that the following describes what it means to be visually literate:

A visually literate person is able to: (a) discriminate and make sense of visible objects as part of visual acuity, (b) create static and dynamic visible objects effectively in a defined space, (c) comprehend and appreciate the visual treatment of others, and (d) conjure objects in the mind’s eye (Eilam, 2012, p. 277, citing Brill, Kim, & Branch, 2007, p. 55).

To the aforementioned criteria, she adds a fifth competency: (1) the ability to develop visual literacy in one’s students through improving one’s capacity to use visually rich information in one’s teaching practice. In Eilam’s view, teachers are able to expand their personal understandings as lifelong learners by (a) expanding their knowledge and skills in the field of VR and (b) cultivating a new generation of teachers who are prepared for “a synchronic culture characterized by images and unmediated, forceful visual impacts” (Eilam, 2012, p. 93, citing Emmison & Smith, 2000). This fifth criterion, Billie Eilam asserts, will not be achieved through teacher proofing curriculum. Rather, it will be realized through respectfully understanding teachers’ rightful roles as curriculum makers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Craig & Ross, 2008) and recognizing how vitally important they are to how curriculum becomes interpreted and lived
alongside students in classrooms. Freed from solely paradigmatic claims to their VR knowing, teachers acting as creative artists and agents will mindfully negotiate the global visual world of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century as teachers and learners, and deservedly serve as “the final arbiter[s] of what is taught and how it is taught” (Hlebowitsh, 1990, p. 159, cited in Eilam, 2012, p. 280). Only through this approach will the “best-loved self” (Schwab, 1954/1978; Craig, 2013) of visually literate teachers be embodied and lived.

References


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