

INTRODUCTION

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As schools have become increasingly diverse, the demands on teachers have changed accordingly. Many schools of education that prepare teachers now recognize that all teachers must have the skills, abilities, and attitudes necessary to teach heterogeneous groups of learners within their individual classrooms and schools. It is undisputed that teachers today are expected to be culturally sensitive and have the knowledge, skills, disposition, and commitment for teaching a wide range of children (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Holmes Group, 1990; Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Zeichner, 1993 & 1997). Both the popular press and professional literature are full of references to the increasing heterogeneity of schools and the need for teachers to teach to that diversity.

Although many social changes, legislative decisions, and educational innovations now make the heterogeneity of classrooms more apparent, the truth is that there never was such a thing as a “homogeneous” classroom; we must acknowledge all the forms of diversity that have always been present in schools as well as the differences among students that have only recently been recognized or attended to (Sapon-Shevin, 1999).

INCREASING DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

The growing diversity in America’s schools is undeniable. Classrooms include more students of color, students whose primary language is not English, and recent immigrants. According to the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (1998), one of every three students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools today is of racial/ethnic minority background. Demographers

predict that students of color will make up about 46 percent of this country's school-age population by the year 2020 (Banks & Banks, 2001). By the year 2035, this group is expected to constitute a numerical majority of the K-12 student population. Children of immigrants make up approximately 20 percent of the children in the United States, bringing a host of cultural and language differences to many classrooms (Dugger, 1998).

One in five children under eighteen years of age currently lives in poverty, making children the fastest growing poverty group in the United States. In American cities, 30 percent of all students live in poverty (U.S. Department of Education, 1995), and there is a growing population of homeless children, many of whom attend school sporadically or not at all.

The number of school-age children who speak a language other than English at home and have difficulty speaking English was 2.4 million in 1995, or 5 percent of all school-age children in the U.S. (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1998). Growing numbers of migrant families whose children attend school intermittently also present challenges to schools.

At the same time, efforts towards mainstreaming and then inclusion mandated by federal legislation and evolving educational practice have brought hundreds of thousands of new students identified as having mild, moderate, and significant disabilities back to general education classrooms, further increasing the heterogeneity found in typical schools. It is estimated that approximately 11 percent of school-age children, or approximately 5.3 million students are classified as disabled (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Many of these students were previously served in special programs, sometimes in separate schools or completely unserved; their return to their neighborhood or community schools represents another major shift in the school population.

WHY COOPERATIVE LEARNING?

As schools move closer to the goal of providing education for all children within inclusive classrooms and schools, increasing amounts of attention and energy are being devoted to developing pedagogical approaches that are appropriate in heterogeneous classrooms. Teachers must structure the educational and social environment so that students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to interact across both perceived and actual differences and disabilities. Many teachers who are working in diverse or inclusive classrooms are particularly eager to develop modes of instruction that do not isolate and stigmatize learners with different needs: "Everyone write your book reports, and Michael, come over here and draw a picture" is an approach that not only separates children unnecessarily, but also denies all children the opportunity to learn and interact with others in ways that will enhance their academic and social growth. The realization that

complete individualization is not a practical or even desirable solution to meeting the diverse needs of children within a single classroom has led many inclusion advocates to promote cooperative learning as the pedagogy of choice.

Over the last ten years, cooperative learning has become accepted as one of the “best practices” in education. School districts hiring new teachers expect that the teachers they hire will be at least comfortable, if not skilled, in implementing cooperative learning strategies in the classroom. Consequently, many teacher education programs have increased the number of courses and opportunities for novice and experienced teachers to learn how to design and implement cooperative/collaborative learning.

Cooperative learning has been used extensively within “regular education” classrooms (McTighe & Lyman, 1988; Jones & Steinbrink, 1991; Almasi, 1995; Gambrell, 1996) and “special education” classrooms (Hoover & Patton, 1995). Cooperative learning is of value for all students including those who have been identified as “at risk,” “bilingual,” “gifted,” and “normal.” Cooperative learning encourages mutual respect and learning among students with varying talents and abilities, languages, racial, and ethnic backgrounds (Marr, 1997). Sudzina (1993) reports that cooperative learning is effective in reducing prejudice among students and in meeting the academic and social needs of students at risk for educational failure. All students need to learn and work in environments where their individual strengths are recognized and individual needs are addressed. Many educators today strive to ensure that multiple intelligence theory and differentiated instruction are incorporated into their curricula (Gardner, 1993; Armstrong, 1994, Tomlinson, 1999). Emotional intelligence is also an important facet of classroom community (Goleman, 1995) that requires teacher attention. All students need to learn within a supportive community in order to feel safe enough to take risks (Sapon-Shevin, 1999). Cooperative learning arrangements have been found to be useful for increasing achievement, encouraging student involvement, and enhancing motivation for learning (Polloway, Patton, & Serna, 2001.)

One of the goals of cooperative learning is to disrupt typical hierarchies of who is “smart” and who is not; Cohen (1994) has extensively documented the ways in which issues of societal status are often reproduced within cooperative learning activities unless specific steps are taken to alter that relationship. Cooperative learning can allow all students to work together, each student experiencing the role of teacher and of learner, and each student modeling recognition of and respect for many different skills and learning styles. If teachers or students are uncomfortable with cooperative learning, it is often because they have adopted a particular technique without a firm understanding of the underlying principles and do not have sufficient support to implement creative, multilevel cooperative learning activities that allow students to participate at different levels, with differentiated goals and varying levels of support.

CHANGING HOW WE PREPARE TEACHERS

Teachers are confronted on a regular basis with educational innovations that must be incorporated into their teaching: whole language, critical thinking, authentic assessment, and so forth. Some teachers (and administrators) hope they can ignore what they would categorize as “fads” in education, waiting for them to pass and be replaced by “the next thing,” thus saving themselves the time and energy needed to learn about and implement new practices. Not only is there a compelling research base in support of cooperative learning, but it is also fully compatible with other currently prominent “best practices” such as differentiated instruction, hands-on learning, and authentic assessment (Gambrell, 1996).

How do institutions of teacher education teach cooperative learning? Is it simply a course students take or does a focus on cooperative learning permeate the central design and mission of the program? What, precisely, do teacher educators think beginning (and experienced) teachers need to know about cooperative learning? How are those skills best acquired and evaluated? Are there sufficient opportunities for students to practice their beginning cooperative learning skills during their field experiences and practica?

This volume explores practices in teacher education programs that teach cooperative learning strategies to their students. The project grew out of an investigation by the International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education (IASCE); teacher educators from across the United States and across the world were asked to identify programs that might offer others an understanding of best practices in preparing teachers in cooperative learning.

Most teacher educators were reluctant to claim that their institutions had “figured it out” and could claim the best cooperative learning preparation possible. Indeed, one of our findings was the paucity of research in this area. Many teacher education programs acknowledged that they had limited follow-up data on the long-term effects of their preparation programs. All of those surveyed admitted that changing teacher education programs is slow, hard work, fraught with institutional pitfalls and constraints.

We selected teacher education programs from ten institutions with long-term experience in teaching cooperative learning. These were all programs implemented with thoughtful self-criticism and considerable experimentation with new and better ways to teach and embody cooperation. The authors were all able to talk about how they have confronted the dilemmas and challenges involved in using cooperative and collaborative learning approaches within their programs. The description of each program or process was illustrative of one or more of the issues and concerns that become manifest when teacher education programs attempt to change the ways in which teachers are prepared. An examination of these programs can help us to understand the complexities of

contemporary teacher education and help us to analyze and critique our own practices in preparing teachers.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

The teacher education programs described in this volume vary along many dimensions. Represented here are large, public universities (both urban and rural); small, private colleges; elite private universities; campuses that are part of a larger statewide university system, a Canadian university and a German university. Part 1 includes cases that represent a range of models of teacher education: those that offer education as an undergraduate major; credential programs restricted to graduate students; final certification for previously credentialed teachers; programs that certify elementary teachers; and those that prepare middle- and secondary-level teachers as well. Some of the programs presented here are small and cohesive, in which a number of faculty work closely together, utilizing a shared approach and ideology. Others represent one of several specializations within larger programs that offer a variety of approaches. In some of the programs, cooperative learning is a primary strategy taught to students, and the emphasis on cooperative learning is coupled with a focus on teaching for social justice. In other programs, cooperative learning is seen as a critical strategy for teaching diverse students in urban settings. Still others align cooperative learning closely with a particular subject matter such as literacy or science.

In chapter 1, Rolheiser and Anderson present a Canadian perspective in their description of practices in a fifth-year master's program featuring cooperative learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. They include seven strategies for teaching about cooperative learning that are part of the program, as well as a discussion of the ways in which the existence of various program options within the same teacher education design is both advantageous and problematic.

In chapter 2, Brody and Nagel from Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, give us a glimpse of a program in which an extensive internship experience for their preservice Master's program focuses on the role of teacher as decision maker. The authors explore the importance of the internship experience in shaping new teachers as well as the challenges to faculty as they attempt to maintain program ideology and consistency in the face of changing state licensure structures and other outside constraints.

Schniedewind, in chapter 3, describes a perspective, known as Socially Conscious Cooperation Learning, in which cooperative learning is both a pedagogical strategy and a philosophical worldview. She analyzes data from program graduates to determine the influence on teachers' practice of instruction that integrates cooperative learning pedagogy and philosophy.

Hanley and Harris of Anderson College, in South Carolina, consider their undergraduate teacher education program in chapter 4, in which cooperative learning strategies are sequenced in a way that the designers find logically defensible and pedagogically sound. The chapter also explores the challenges of encouraging beginning teachers to use cooperative learning consistently once they have left the program.

Lyman and Davidson describe the teacher education program at the University of Maryland in chapter 5. They illustrate the ways in which the program works with teacher education centers that are evolving into professional development schools. The authors conclude that cooperative learning must be modeled, experienced in the learner's role, practiced repeatedly in the field, seen as part of a constellation of allied strategies and techniques, and understood in relationship to social and academic outcomes in order for implementation to be successful.

Although most of the programs described are those that prepare elementary level teachers, Foote and associates in chapter 6, present a teacher education program for secondary education teachers at Niagara University, in New York. The challenge of reforming secondary teacher education lies in merging a focus on the powerful pedagogy of cooperative learning with subject matter that is more often taught through lectures.

In chapter 7, Finkbeiner, from Kassel University in Germany, shares the ways in which she uses collaborative learning in the context of foreign language teacher training. She explores the attitudes and beliefs that are important prerequisites for enhancing novice teachers' ability to implement and integrate a cooperative and collaborative teaching approach into their own teaching repertoires.

Slostad, Baloché and Darigan in chapter 8 further explore issues of program coherence. They describe their elementary certification program at West Chester University in Pennsylvania in which multiple program options exist, only one of which uses cooperative learning as a central organizing value. The advantage of a program in which all faculty are strongly cohesive is discussed, as are the challenges of instituting broader level reform.

The chapter by Cohen and associates (chapter 9) presents lessons learned from systematic data collection and experience with teaching Complex Instruction (CI) to preservice teachers. Drawing from a collaborative project between Stanford University and five campuses of the California State University, the study explores the relationship between preservice teachers' coursework on cooperative learning and their expectations and skills implementing cooperative learning in their first year of teaching. The authors speak to the need for preservice coursework to be linked concretely to other experiences that encourage new teachers to implement cooperative learning.

The ways in which teachers' understanding of the classroom as a social system impinge on successful cooperative learning are explored by Lotan in

chapter 10 on teaching beginning teachers at Stanford University. With an emphasis on the concept of delegation of authority, Lotan shares simulations designed to engage beginning teachers in the struggles of empowering students while remaining professionally responsible.

Part 2 provides commentaries on the cases by the three editors and a classroom teacher. In chapter 11 Brody considers what teacher education programs can learn from these cases about designing their curriculum and instruction for preservice teachers and considers the points of agreement on what novice teachers should understand and be able to put into practice during student teaching or by the end of program. Cohen, in chapter 12, notes the organizational constraints and challenges found in the cases, and suggests the need for teacher education programs to move to structural arrangements that will support and enable teacher educators to meet those demands. In chapter 13, Sapon-Shevin reminds us that there are issues and concerns about the ways in which broader societal concerns about justice, fairness, equality, voice, and power are linked to the teaching of cooperative learning. She addresses the question, “How does the cooperative learning modeled in these chapters link this promising pedagogy to broader societal and cultural conditions and concerns?” In chapter 14, Brubacher affirms how critical classroom teachers are in connecting coursework and practice. He draws out some promising practices in providing opportunities for preservice teachers to work with a classroom teacher who is a model and who provides guided experience in cooperative learning. Finally, in the conclusion, Sapon-Shevin and Cohen summarize the challenges for the reform of teacher education from the lens of cooperative learning and discuss the need and direction for further research.

ABOUT READING THIS VOLUME

The ten program descriptions and the commentaries that follow raise many questions. These can be used to frame the reading of this volume. Readers might want to ask these questions of their own programs and settings and think about their own challenges in the ways that we asked our contributors to think about theirs.

- How is cooperative learning presented to students, and how does that conceptualization affect students’ willingness and ability to implement the approach? If cooperative learning is presented as a teaching strategy that is effective for certain kinds of instruction or specific populations of students, does this increase the likelihood that students will move towards comfortable adoption and implementation? Or, should cooperative learning be embedded within a

more coherent orientation to teaching and education—part of an approach that values student engagement and constructivist theories of learning as well as teacher empowerment?

- When teaching students a new instructional strategy, what sequence of steps or sequence of complexity is the most effective? Is there a clear continuum of cooperative learning strategies that allows us to start with the “easier” strategies and then move to more complex ones as students gain mastery? Or does teaching students less cognitively taxing or less fully developed forms of cooperative learning contribute to increasing the chances that they view (and use) cooperative learning as a quick fix rather than as a complex instructional technique embedded in a demanding philosophical framework?
- What is the relationship between the coursework beginning teachers take and their work in the field? What kinds of practica and field work experiences are necessary to support teachers’ learning in general and their acquisition of cooperative learning skills in particular? What kinds of relationships are necessary between the university and the field sites in order to ensure quality programs?
- Do all teacher education departments or program faculty members have to believe in the value of cooperative learning in order for students to learn the approach successfully? Do students learn more when there is total program cohesion? How do those faculty who are not members of a cohesive group maintain their support and focus?
- What do beginning teachers need to understand about resistance to cooperative learning? When teacher educators, teachers or administrators are reluctant to teach or implement cooperative learning, what are the possible sources of that resistance and how might they be overcome? Is it possible to *mandate* best practice, or are more empowering forms of school change necessary?

Each of the programs presented here allows us to understand a different dimension of teacher education. The range of programs forces us to think about our own understandings of what it means to learn to teach or to be a teacher. The programs represented encourage us to challenge the ways in which teacher education programs prepare future teachers to implement sophisticated instructional strategies such as cooperative learning. Successful teaching in diverse settings demands that teachers be treated as professionals who can and need to understand underlying educational theory and its link to practice rather than being forced to implement scripted teaching programs or teacher-proof curricula that assume limited aptitude on the part of teachers or students.

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