

An Experiment in Teacher Preparation: Teacher Education for Civic Responsibility

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An unpublished study of classroom characteristics most remembered by second year undergraduates identifies classrooms where 1) teachers do most of the talking; 2) students have rare opportunities to respond; 3) teachers control the environment; 4) students have few choices about issues that affect them; 5) competitive learning is the rule; and 6) cooperative learning is the exception (Ohio

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University, 1989). Thankfully not all classrooms fit this description. As Wood describes in *Schools that Work*, democratic classrooms do indeed exist and flourish in this country (Wood, 1992).

At the core of their existence lies an assumption that democratic values "have to do with passing on our democratic belief that people can be trusted to make sensible decisions concerning their own lives and the lives of other people" (Hendrick, 1992, p. 51). Clearly, this belief was not a factor in the

majority of classrooms recalled by the undergraduates cited above. What also seems clear is a lack of student control and power, not unlike Max who responds to his lack of power by becoming king in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak 1963).

At least one reason for the enduring popularity of Max is that children and adults identify with the powerlessness that permeates their childhoods. For too many the advent of school offers little respite from this condition. If anything, the last shred of autonomy is wrested from young children when they find they must go to the bathroom at assigned times. Few adults would disagree that almost every one of these same children knows the way to their school bathrooms. Yet such arbitrary control is rarely questioned.

A group of faculty and students at Ohio University believes that classrooms need not be places of teacher domination and student powerlessness. For the past three years they have been conducting an experiment. Together they are seeking to learn how to provide a teacher preparation experience that focuses on what they believe to be the original and true mission of public schools in this country: preparation for democratic citizenship. The following article tells the story of that experiment, beginning with the program's rationale and continuing through its birth and ongoing evolution.

Program Rationale

Bullough has forcefully argued that we as a nation have forgotten the origins of public schooling in this country (Bullough, 1988). He points out that one of the forefathers of American public education, Thomas Jefferson, saw a clear link between democratic government and education. For the American people to govern themselves and avoid the despotic traditions they had so recently escaped, Jefferson recognized the necessity of an educated citizenry. His belief in the connection between democracy and education led Jefferson to champion public commitment to schooling for all American children.

More recently, Bullough contends, we have moved away from this commitment to public education for democracy and towards a conception of schooling as nothing more than preparation for the work world. Such a conception is exemplified by recent calls for vouchers and applying marketplace values to public schooling. What we are thus in danger of losing is what a long tradition of American educators have argued should be the essential focus of public schools: a civic education that seeks to "serve the general welfare of a democratic society" (Butts, 1980, p. 114).

The Teacher Education for Civic Responsibility (TECR) Program was prompted by the shared belief of a group of faculty members that we have strayed from our society's original intention to serve the public good by educating all American children for democratic citizenship. As the Program Mission Statement states:

No nation in recorded history has ever made the promise that America makes to its citizens—a free public education to every citizen, regardless of race, creed,

gender, or handicapping condition. We have made this promise because, as Jefferson first put it, public education makes democracy possible. This commitment requires that public schools be sites of democratic education. Thus, at a minimum, teachers and schools that take their civic mission seriously work to insure that every student:

- can read, write, listen, and compute in ways that enable one to understand the issues that confront us as citizens;
- values the fundamental precepts of democratic life, including equity, community, and personal liberty;
- has a willingness to participate publicly in the name of the common good;
- believes that one's contribution makes a difference, that one has the right and obligation to contribute, and that we have a duty to honor the contributions of all our neighbors;
- has an awareness that there are a variety of ways to order social life and that it is the right of citizens to choose freely between multiple social options (Ohio University, 1989, p. 2)

To develop the above characteristics on the part of our students, along with the knowledge and skills necessary for further education and the world of work, the program believes it essential that teachers continually examine their practices, curriculum, and the entire school experience in relation to young people's development as citizens. Hence, the TECR Program has been framed around the civic mission of the teacher.

Program Design and Inception

The initial cohort group of TECR students entered the program in the Fall of 1989. Their interest had been sparked by a series of presentations and invitations to apply during Freshman orientation. Applicants were interviewed by faculty members and selected on the basis of their perceived potential in becoming teachers who are committed to creating a classroom that fosters democratic habits such as self-discipline, mutual respect, and cooperation. Since the entry of the original group of 11 students, two additional groups have entered the program in 1990 and 1991, which has brought program enrollment to 53 students.

TECR students experience a teacher education curriculum which in a number of ways reflects the traditional preparation experience:

1. The first year is largely devoted to fulfilling university requirements for general education in liberal arts. In some cases these requirements are met through liberal arts courses which have been designed to reflect program emphasis on connections between democracy and education.
2. Elementary, secondary, and special education students must meet state certification requirements for academic credits in subjects they will teach.

However, their preparation experience also differs from the traditional program in ways that reflect the TECR Program's focus on the civic role of the teacher

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in preparing their students for democratic citizenship. Six major distinctions may be identified between the traditional and the TECR experience:

1. Liberal Arts Core

As mentioned above, all university students are required to fulfill General Education distribution requirements by taking courses in humanities, mathematics and science, comparative arts and literature, communications, and social sciences. Where possible, TECR faculty have consulted with faculty in other colleges who have developed courses which frame study of the liberal arts around notions of public responsibility and democratic government. In other cases, already existing courses have been identified which are particularly relevant to program goals. These courses begin during the freshman year and culminate with a requirement that all seniors take an interdisciplinary course which emphasizes the interrelationships between artificially-separated bodies of knowledge.

One example of a liberal arts course that is required for all TECR students is Political Science 102 which focuses upon the respective roles that government and the private sector play in responding to societal problems such as unemployment and homelessness. Students are challenged to examine the ways that citizens in a democracy can better understand the origins of such problems, as well as to consider the costs and benefits of alternative solutions. Another required Liberal Arts course examines the historic interaction of technology and society and the various ways that technologies affect private and public lives. Examples of topics that are studied include biotechnology and its implications for human freedom; technology, the law, and public order; and the problems and possibilities of cable television.

2. Student Enrollment in TECR Courses

Within the traditional program elementary, secondary, and special education preservice teachers follow different course sequences. Rarely do they find opportunities to interact with one another, particularly in relation to their professional preparation.

In contrast, TECR students enter the program as part of a cohort group which moves through the preparation experience together. In a number of courses students from all three areas take courses together. They are thus able to gain insight into students of differing ages and ability levels through the shared experiences of their peers. These enriching experiences are augmented by changes in the structure and content of the TECR curriculum itself.

3. The TECR Curriculum

Working collaboratively, the TECR faculty designed a sequence of education courses which are intended to introduce and develop pedagogical understandings, commitments, and skills that will enable preservice students to create and nurture democratic environments within their classrooms.

Freshman Year: The Professional Education course sequence begins in the Spring of the Freshman year when first-year TECR students enroll in "Democracy and Education." In this course students inquire into and explore the writings and ideas of people like Jefferson, Madison, and Dewey. Students are expected to reflect critically on their own schooling experience, particularly in relation to the ways that their own understandings and commitments to democratic participation were enabled or hindered. As in other courses within the professional sequence, students and instructor compare and contrast theory and practice in the ways that the evolution of public schools in this country has achieved or veered from their avowed intentions. Students carefully examine the factory model of schooling which has dominated the structure of American public schools throughout this century and also consider alternative ways of organizing classrooms which are more reflective of participatory democracy (Bullough, 1988). As explained below, this initial exploration of the underlying purposes and outcomes of schooling is accompanied by a field experience which exposes students to elementary, middle school, and secondary classrooms.

Sophomore Year: During their Sophomore year, students begin focused study of learners and the complex relationship between teaching and learning. Unlike the traditional program, where elementary, secondary, and special education students focus on the developmental characteristics and needs of the particular students they will teach, TECR students study child and adolescent development from birth through young adulthood in the year-long course "Childhood in America." Once again this course is accompanied by a field experience which affords students regular opportunities to observe and interact with students and teachers in public school classrooms. Additionally, each student observes and studies a particular child or adolescent over a three-to-six-month period to gain further insight into the dynamics of development.

A second course taken during the Sophomore year is "Introduction to Exceptional Students." This course, which includes both classroom work and a field experience, enrolls both TECR and traditional program students. However, the TECR students complete their field requirements in the same school as the "Childhood in America" field experience to foster comparisons across both courses.

In addition to their study of human development, second-year students also begin their study of the teaching act itself. "Teaching Techniques for the Democratic Classroom" explores the nature of the teacher/student relationship and the challenges of creating a classroom atmosphere that moves away from teacher dominance.

In this introductory methods course, particular attention is given to two models of teaching: explicit teaching (Rosenshine, 1986) and cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1991). These models were selected for focused study because

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of their emphasis on student participation in classroom learning.

Explicit teaching provides an effective strategy for direct instruction in skills and sequential subject matter and is derived from research in elementary and secondary classrooms. In addition, explicit teaching emphasizes the need for ongoing communication between teacher and students through its focus on guided practice and feedback, two explicit teaching functions which are characteristic of any effective teacher/learner interaction. Students prepare and teach two explicit teaching lessons during the course, one in the university classroom and the other in their field experience classroom. Both lessons are videotaped and carefully analyzed in relation to the student's effectiveness in applying the explicit teaching functions.

The second model of teaching, cooperative learning, is used in a variety of ways during the course. Students experience cooperative group work repeatedly and join the instructor in reflecting upon alternative ways of structuring groups, assignments, and roles. Cooperative learning was selected for emphasis during this course and a second course in pedagogy for four reasons:

1. Cooperative learning emphasizes student ownership of their own learning, on emphasis which is consistent with the TECR Program's goals of promoting active and responsible citizenship.
2. The particular model of cooperative learning used in the TECR Program was developed by Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec and is structured around five essential components: positive interdependence, individual accountability, group processing, face-to-face interaction, and cooperative skills (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1991). Each of these components reflects specific qualities critical to a democratic classroom and participatory democratic government.
3. Classroom research on cooperative learning has consistently demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing both academic achievement and social skill development (Johnson&Johnson, 1989). In numerous studies which have compared competitive, individualistic, and cooperative learning environments, cooperative learning's effectiveness has been indicated for students of all ages and abilities.
4. Finally, cooperative learning is emphasized because it enhances the learning and teaching experience of students and instructors within the program itself. The qualities which students need to develop for themselves and which will enable them to work effectively within challenging classroom environments are consistently modeled.

A fourth education course that students take during their second year, "Learning from Non-western Cultures," focuses attention on African and Asian cultures and examines alternative schooling traditions. This course is offered concurrent to the introductory methods course to challenge students to think and relate to other cultures' educational methods conceptions and practices and become sensitive to our increasingly pluralistic society and world.

During Spring quarter 1992, students enrolled in this course planned and implemented a "hunger meal" for 300 middle school students. Their design of this project enabled them to use teaching knowledge and skills they were concurrently studying in their teaching methods course, as well as heighten middle school students' awareness of issues of hunger and injustice.

Junior Year: During their third year, TECR students continue their study of the underlying connections between public responsibility, democratic government, and public schools, as well as their development of teaching skills to expand their instructional repertoire.

In "Advanced Teaching Techniques for the Democratic Classroom," they further develop their skills related to explicit teaching and cooperative learning. In addition, attention is given to a number of other teaching models which again emphasize student ownership of their own learning, and the teacher's role as facilitator of student learning. These models include inquiry learning, project-centered learning and group discussion.

Focus on practical skill development continues in "Curriculum Design for the Democratic Classroom" where students design learning materials and activities which reflect program emphasis on experiential learning. Students read and apply the works of noted theorists of democratic education like James, Dewey, and Kirkpatrick while examining historic and modern applications of their ideas in programs such as Foxfire, whole language, the integrated day, and the Project Method. Each student in this course develops a teaching unit in consultation with an inservice teacher, in most cases a teacher they have worked with for the previous two years.

Senior Year: The first cohort group of TECR students will be student teaching during the winter quarter of the 1992-93 academic year. Each student will be placed with a cooperative teacher who is familiar with program goals and philosophy. Prior to, and following, student teaching, each student will enroll in a pre- and post-student teaching practicum that will involve weekly work and time spent in the classroom with the teacher who will mentor their student teaching experience. Weekly seminars with a university supervisor will also be held during student teaching.

4. Field Experiences

TECR field experiences differ from the traditional program in a number of ways. As mentioned above, elementary, secondary, and special education students move through the program as cohort groups. Beginning their first year, students gain practicum experience in elementary, middle school, and secondary classrooms. Not only do these experiences expose them to developmental characteristics of children of various age levels. Students also observe teachers as they teach to meet the needs of different age levels.

Additionally, because public school and university faculty have collaborated in the development of this program, more flexible practicum assignments have been made possible. All students have had opportunities to observe in different classrooms and schools; some have enjoyed the opportunity to return to work with previously-visited classrooms and teachers.

5. Visits to Model Schools and Programs

During the Christmas/New Year vacation each of the past two years, TECR students and faculty have made special trips to visit schools and programs that have provided unique examples of the application of program principles. In 1990 students visited Chicago and Milwaukee schools to observe and study thematic and whole language approaches to the teaching of reading and writing, as well as a bilingual school that has adopted site-based management.

In December 1991, students and faculty traveled to New York City where they spent four days visiting Central Park East Community School, a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools. Central Park East faculty and students are committed to a school experience that is integrative and jointly owned by students, their families, and the school faculty and staff. Both groups returned from these visits with concrete examples of ways that classrooms can be organized to reject the factory model of schooling in favor of a more participatory learning environment.

6. Faculty Collaboration

The final and perhaps most significant distinction that sets the program apart from the traditional teacher preparation program is the intensive faculty collaboration that began with the informal conversation that sparked the idea of framing a program around the civic mission of the teacher. As the program continues into its third year, so does this collaboration.

Six faculty members within the College of Education meet bi-weekly to manage and oversee the program. This group has developed and taught the professional course sequence described above. They also work with public school teachers and other university faculty in arranging field experiences for students.

In many ways the shared commitment of these faculty members has contributed to the initiation of the TECR Program. They represent teaching experience at six major universities in different states. A common starting point for each of them was a desire to create a program that provided a focused emphasis on democratic and experiential education throughout the preservice teacher's preparation—as opposed to what in some places has become a smorgasbord of course offerings in pedagogy and psychology, at times with contradictory emphases and themes.

Student and Faculty Perceptions to Date

Student and Faculty perceptions of the program as it moves towards its fourth

year are quite positive. Early in the program's third year students and faculty were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire to evaluate program effectiveness. Of the 23 who responded, 13 indicated they were very satisfied with the program, nine indicated satisfaction, and one stated she or he was somewhat satisfied. None indicated that they were not satisfied with the program.

The following major strengths were identified repeatedly:

1. Field work

Fourteen respondents indicated that the emphasis on field experiences that begin during the first year has been a significant plus for the program. Students emphasized that they value opportunities to see connections between theory and practice. The following comments reflect student perceptions of the value of the field component:

Getting into the schools our freshman year was great! I knew after spring quarter that I was **definitely** in the right major.

I also like the field work. It lets me see, (sic) what we have discussed in class, (sic) in action. The things we discuss are proven. It's often difficult to understand a concept unless you see it with your own eyes.

2. Models of practice

Eight students highlighted the value of the emphasis on experiential learning. Student viewpoints were expressed in a variety of ways:

Another important aspect is that we learn from doing. We don't sit, take notes, and get lectured. We get to go into the field, write about what we see and feel, and teach one another about our readings and experiences.

We teach how we were taught. The program is very conducive to the development of innovative minds and creative teaching styles because we are being taught in innovative ways ourselves.

Another student observation spoke not only about the TECR program but also the disenfranchisement that students often feel:

We are treated as intelligent individuals instead of just plain students. What we learn in class is what we need to know, not only for teaching, but for our lives. We aren't given "useless" information that we swallow and never use.

3. Cohort grouping

Seven students expressed their positive regard for the strong sense of group identity and cohesion they have developed through the cohort grouping of elementary, secondary, and special education preservice teachers.

The program, which has proved to me that democratic teaching nurtures creative minds more so than traditional methods, is constructed around a "close-knit" group

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of students who deal with each other in close, personal ways—this has important benefits which I believe are important when dealing with a class. We teach how we were taught.

A majority of student respondents indicated one major problem as well that appears to be related to the program's newness. Students described frustration with their role as "guinea pigs" in breaking new ground and indicated that they sometimes feel uneasy when courses that they are taking, which are being taught for the first time, do not appear in the official university bulletin. It is anticipated that as the program grows in numbers, becomes better known, and is described in detail in the university bulletin, this problem will dissipate.

It is also important to note that student acceptance into the program follows a formal application and interview by program faculty. When students are accepted into the program, they are informed that their continuation depends upon mutual agreement between themselves and the faculty that both they and the program benefit from their participation. During the program's first three years, four students have chosen to leave the program. Two decided to transfer to other institutions, one of whom has since returned to the university and rejoined TECR. The other two students, following careful consultation with program faculty, decided that they would be better served by the traditional program.

A Look to the Future

What lies ahead for the Teacher Education for Civic Responsibility Program? Students and faculty are pleased by the program's first three years. With full recognition that the ultimate indicator of program success will be the classroom effectiveness of its graduates, we look forward to the first cohort group's student teaching experience which will occur in the winter of 1992-93. The gradual growth in admissions from 11 the first year, to 15 the second, to the 26 students who were recently admitted to the program indicates an increase in both student awareness and interest.

During the Spring 1992 academic quarter, a number of TECR courses were moved to public school settings for the first time. The intention was to facilitate increased involvement by public school teachers and administrators in program planning and implementation. Initial feedback from public school teachers and administrators indicated interest in expanding their collaboration with the program even further.

Conclusion

This article opened by describing the Teacher Education for Civic Responsibility Program as an experiment. Those of us on the "inside" of the experiment know that it is far from over. Much remains to be learned about effective ways of preparing teachers who are knowledgeable, skilled, and committed to creating more respon-

sive, open, and ultimately more democratic learning environments for their students.

At the same time, feedback from students and instructors indicates that their experiences to date have expanded their horizons to consider possibilities for teaching and learning and the teacher/learner relationship that are new and exciting. As Freire has observed, "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 1970, p. 58). If he is right, perhaps the point is not that the experiment be completed, but that it continue.

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