



"I had no idea": Developing dispositional awareness and sensitivity through a cross-professional pedagogy

Benjamin H. Dotger*

Syracuse University, Department of Teaching & Leadership, 161 Huntington Hall, Syracuse, NY 13244, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 4 August 2008

Received in revised form

26 June 2009

Accepted 6 October 2009

Keywords:

Parent conference

Teacher dispositions

Standardized patient

Standardized parent

Situated cognition

ABSTRACT

This research scrutinized the diffusion of a medical education pedagogy to the context of teacher education. Specifically, it focused on the use of standardized parents as an emerging pedagogy in teacher education. Preservice teachers taking part in a six case, fifteen-week intervention showed advances in multicultural awareness and ethical sensitivity as they engaged in multiple simulated parent–teacher conferences. Implications center on the use of this pedagogy within teacher education contexts to further advance the professional dispositions of teachers as they prepare to teach in diverse scholastic environments schools.

© 2009 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The increasing ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic diversity within schools offers potential for more integrated and inclusive communities (NCES, 2007; Villegas, 2007). While school leaders are responsible for fostering scholarly cultures that welcome diverse populations, teachers enact such culture through professional, invitational, and inclusive dialogue with students and their families. Professional dialogue begins with teachers' awareness of, and sensitivity to, the diverse racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, and disability demographics of students and their families. Based on this foundation of awareness and sensitivity, teachers are limited only by the degree to which they possess the skill sets to engage in productive dialogue with parents and caregivers, their primary allies in the support of student success.

The research base on parent involvement clearly demonstrates positive scholastic improvements for students (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; Epstein, 2001; Finn, 1998; Garcia, 2000; Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Keyes, 2004; Pape, 1999; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007; Witmer, 2005). While scholars associated with this established research base are actively scrutinizing and promoting the connections between schools and families, such connections are often only tacitly addressed by teacher preparation institutions (Epstein, 1995; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). Simply

stated, teacher preparation institutions fall short of helping teachers acquire and develop the necessary interpersonal skill sets to engage and communicate with families (Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; MacLure & Walker, 2000; McBride, 1991; McMurray-Schwarz & Baum, 2000; Nathan & Radcliff, 1994; Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997; Tichenor, 1998). Failure to prepare future teachers to communicate with families through verbal and written mediums is compounded by the fact that familial demographics are increasingly different than those of novice teachers. While the population of students continues to diversify across socio-cultural contexts (race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, marital status, dis/ability, religion, etc.), those who are preparing to teach them have not experienced the same diversification. Despite increased efforts at recruitment, teachers preparing to enter the profession continue to reflect the majority culture (Van Hook, 2002; Villegas, 1991, 2007).

The increasing cultural diversification, the continued importance of parent involvement, and the paucity of teacher preparation in school–family communications, constitute a complex intersection for teacher preparation institutions. As Epstein (2001) notes, these factors point to the question of how teacher preparation institutions can best support interactions between teachers and diverse groups of parents/caregivers. In consideration of these three factors and Epstein's seminal question, the reporting researcher designed a teacher education pedagogy that provides preservice teachers – individuals who are still in teacher preparation programs and are not yet licensed – with multiple opportunities to practice, reflect upon, and further develop interpersonal skill sets to communicate with

* Tel.: +1 315 443 1937; fax: +1 315 443 3289.

E-mail address: bdotger@syrr.edu

parents/caregivers from diverse socio-cultural contexts. This pedagogy – the Parent/Caregiver Conferencing Model (PCM) – lends itself to numerous researchable questions related to preservice teacher preparation for engagement and interactions with parents/caregivers. Other manuscripts carefully outline the theoretical and conceptual frameworks associated with the PCM (Dotger, Dotger, & Maher, under review), describing approaches to design and implementation (Dotger, Harris, & Hansel, 2008) and its development of novice teacher identity (Dotger & Smith, 2009). Building off those foundational manuscripts, the study reported herein targets preservice teacher dispositions, defined by Reiman and Johnson (2003) as trends in judgment and action within ill-structured professional contexts. Specifically, this research focuses on the PCM's ability to develop teachers' multicultural awareness, ethical sensitivity, and ethical judgment through simulated parent–teacher interactions:

- (A) Can the 15-week PCM intervention develop preservice teachers' awareness of and sensitivity to multicultural and moral/ethical contexts emerging within simulated parent–teacher conferences?
- (B) Can the 15-week PCM intervention develop preservice teachers' ability to construct morally-defensible judgments in conjunction with dilemmas presented within simulated parent–teacher conferences?

In essence, the researcher wanted to know if the PCM was effective at helping novice teachers develop in their multicultural awareness, ethical sensitivity, and ethical judgment as they engage in complex scholastic and socio-cultural simulated interactions.

1.1. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks

This manuscript reports empirical data from the Parent/Caregiver Conferencing Model (PCM), a fifteen-week intervention designed to guide preservice teachers in acquiring and developing professional parent conferencing skill sets. The PCM draws directly from the medical education pedagogy of *standardized patients*. Medical and physical therapy schools commonly employ carefully trained individuals to portray patients with distinct ailments, allowing future physicians the opportunity to practice both diagnostic and patient communication skills (AAMC, 1998; Barrows, 2000). These individuals are commonly referred to as *standardized patients* as a result of their careful training on a specific case. Often, multiple individuals will be trained to portray the same patient in the very same manner, working to *make standard* their verbalizations, non-verbal behaviors, and physical representations in order to present multiple physicians with the same set of patient symptoms (Barrows, 1993).

The PCM employs a similar pedagogy to help novice teachers practice their professional interpersonal communications with parents. Instead of training individuals to portray patients for medical cases, though, the PCM is based on a series of increasingly complex scholastic cases, where carefully trained individuals portray parents during simulated parent–teacher conferences. These cases (see Table 1) were crafted directly from the accounts of both practicing public school teachers and parents of current public school students, introducing complex variables that encompass scholastic, familial, and socio-cultural contexts.

Each of the six cases guides the training of individuals to portray *parents*, containing detailed interaction protocols to structure simulated parent–teacher conferences between standardized parents and preservice teachers taking part in the PCM. It is important to note that the use of the term *standardized parent* in no way suggests the perception that all real-life parents are the same. Instead, the term *standardized parents* denotes that individuals working within the PCM

Table 1

PCM case content and standardized parents.

Case content and order within the PCM intervention	Standardized parent
1. Conducting a getting-acquainted/role-defining conference with a young, impoverished single parent.	Jenny Burton
2. Listening to a single parent's anxiety regarding his daughter's emerging emotional issues.	Donald Bolden
3. Addressing a parent's concerns about pedagogical practices employed within a classroom setting.	Jennifer Turner
4. Discussing a parent's frustration with a teacher's choice of multicultural curricula.	Jim Smithers
5. Working with a physically abused parent to address her son's emerging violent behavior.	Angela Summers
6. Collaborating with a parent to design appropriate interventions for her son, a student with autism.	Lori Danson

are carefully trained to portray a parent in an established, standard manner that closely adheres to a case-based interaction protocol. When multiple individuals portray the same parent in a standard manner, preservice teachers have the opportunity to interact with the same parent and reflect later within their peer groups on their individual approaches to the identical set of circumstances and verbalizations that they all experienced.

The PCM is grounded in the situated cognition, social role-taking, and cognitive developmental theoretical frameworks (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Mead, 1934; Piaget, 1959; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998) that: (a) recognize that knowledge is constructed by individuals through experience; (b) emphasize gradual skill development, as persons' organizing principles, interpretations, and reasoning become more complex and integrated over time; and (c) acknowledge that growth is not automatic, but instead occurs as a result of positive interactions within a supportive, yet progressively challenging environment. These theoretical assumptions serve as the foundation of the fifteen-week PCM, as preservice teachers engage in a complex simulation–reflection process for each of the PCM's six cases listed in Table 1 {See Dotger et al. (2008) for details on the simulations, reflection, and case development components of the PCM}. One week prior to a simulated interaction between teacher participants and standardized parents (SPs), the teachers and SPs receive their respective interaction protocols. The teachers' interaction protocol provides great detail on the hypothetical student on which the simulated conference will focus, describing classroom performance, behavior, appearance, and academic achievement. Depending on the PCM case and whether the conference is teacher- or parent-initiated, this document provides greater or lesser degrees of detail for the teacher leading up to the interaction with the SP. In contrast, the SP interaction protocol is consistently extensive, serving as the training and operational guide for the SP as he/she prepares for and operates within the simulated parent–teacher conference. The SP interaction protocol outlines detailed background context on the parent to be portrayed. In addition, the SP protocol focuses on exact verbal triggers (i.e. questions, statements, declarations, concerns, etc.) to be issued by the SP when in conversation with the participating teacher. Finally, this protocol details exact tones of voice, bodily-kinesthetic positions, and non-verbal facial expressions to be conveyed by the SP during the simulated conference with the teacher Dotger et al. (2008) specifically addresses the recruitment, training, reliability, validity, authenticity, and debriefing of the SPs}. While both protocols provide appropriate background and context to help the SP and teacher understand *why* they are engaging in the simulated conference, the teacher's protocol does not in any way script or direct his/her actions, verbalizations, or professional decisions within the simulation. Prior to the simulation, the teacher is encouraged to operate using his/her professional judgment based on the context provided in the interaction protocol. In contrast, each SP is carefully trained to closely adhere to the protocol throughout

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/374517>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/374517>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)