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ABSTRACT

A case study design that included classroom observation, repeated self-assessments, and formal interviews; was used in a training workshop for 11 preservice teachers. The intent was to train them to use dramatic activities with secondary school students in their own classrooms. The training incorporated elements of theory, demonstration, peer teaching, feedback, classroom implementation, coaching, and social-emotional support. Four sections that were separated by classroom implementation tasks comprised the training workshops. The sections consisted of (1) warm up exercises in which the trainees accustomed their students to using dramatic activities; (2) simulation of course concepts or process; (3) role playing, which emphasized the human elements within the curriculum; and (4) a final training assignment, which assessed the trainees' abilities to transfer the workshop contents to their own instruction. Evaluation of training included trainee self evaluation and observer evaluations. All trainees completed the training; nine considered themselves to be competent at using dramatic activities in their own classrooms. (HOD)

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Training Preservice Teachers to use Dramatic Activities  
with Secondary School Students

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Paper presented to the annual meeting  
of the American Educational Research Association  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
April, 1984

Portions of this paper are taken from the first author's  
doctoral thesis: The Effects of Dramatic Activities on  
Secondary Students Learning, Achievement, and Attitudes

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## Abstract

Eleven preservice teachers were trained to use dramatic activities with students in their own classrooms. The training incorporated elements of theory, demonstration, peer teaching, feedback, classroom implementation, coaching, and social-emotional support. Evaluation of training included trainee self-evaluation and observer evaluations. All trainees completed the training; nine considered themselves to be competent at using dramatic activities in their own classrooms. In this paper, the training are described and the implications of the training model are dicussed.

Instruction in the secondary school classroom and instruction in most teacher education programs are remarkably alike. From John Goodlad's (Goodlad, 1983) recent documentation of secondary classrooms and from Joyce et al.'s (Joyce, Yarger, and Howey, 1977) documentation of preservice teacher education several depressing similarities emerge: 1. the dominant method of instruction is the lecture/recitation method; 2. the dominant mode of evaluation is the course grade; and 3. the dominant metaphor seems to be that of the "empty vessel" waiting to be filled with knowledge. The study we will describe today challenged both the instruction of secondary school teachers as well as the instruction by those teachers.

Dramatic activity represents a classroom experience that is vastly different from traditional instruction, for although teachers set the topic for a given lesson, students determine the course the lesson will take. Students assume major responsibility for giving meaning to concepts covered by the curriculum and for communicating that meaning to other students through action, through dialogue, and through facial and bodily expressions.

The term dramatic activity refers to a class of teaching methods that includes creative dramatics, psychodrama, role-playing, sociodrama, and simulation. These methods encourage a student to enact a scene that is

based upon the issues or concepts of a particular curriculum. Following one or more enactments, the teacher leads a discussion in which students react to the enactment.

Dramatic activities differ from other methods of instruction in two ways: enactment and multi-sensory experience. Enactment consists of two elements: first, the students assume a mental attitude that is different from their immediate experience as a student in a classroom. In a simulation of a physical process students might take the "parts" of atomic particles or microchips; in a simulation of forced arbitration students might assume the "roles" of labor organizers. In both examples, students are no longer "themselves"; they become bound by the physical constraints or by the social roles of the things they represent.

The second major characteristic defining a dramatic activity involves the nature of the total experience such an activity offers the student. Such an experience is multi-sensory because it includes the verbal acts of speaking and listening, plus the opportunity for physical movement. Although an integral part of the arts and of physical education, this blend of the physical and the mental is seldom found in academic coursework.

Way (1973) used the experience offered to the student in his distinction between participation in a dramatic activity and participation in a purely verbal activity. In

a verbal activity students may discuss a concept, but in a dramatic activity they are encouraged to actively struggle with the actions and implications inherent in that concept. In a verbal activity students may intellectualize about an emotion, but in a dramatic activity they receive an opportunity to work with that emotion and its effects on others. Dramatic enactment allows one to examine an experience without personal danger because that experience is "just pretend" (Heathcote, 1981).

To summarize, a dramatic activity allows students to enact and to experience concepts covered by an academic curriculum. These activities provide opportunities to manipulate people, situations, or both and to observe the effects of such manipulation. Thus, students have an experiential base for the testing of hypotheses or for problem-solving. As Bruner (1966) suggested, schools overemphasize methods that rely totally on verbal communication. Such methods do not provide a concrete base for incorporating an idea into existing knowledge structures, and thus no basis for higher order conceptualization. Dramatic activities might provide students with concrete representations of abstract ideas.

In this paper we will discuss a training workshop in which preservice teachers learned to use dramatic activities with their secondary school students. We used a case study

design that included classroom observation, repeated self assessments, and formal interviews, enabling us to monitor the trainees' responses to the training and to provide the trainees with formative feedback throughout the training.

### SUBJECTS

Eleven volunteers from the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP), representing the five subject areas of math, science, social studies, English, and foreign language, were recruited in the winter quarter, 1983. This quarter was a particularly stressful time for the teachers, including three required courses at Stanford, two or three high school classes for which they were solely responsible, plus the workshop requirements. The workshop sessions were designed to accommodate the teachers' busy schedule.

The trainees volunteered for the workshop because they were intrigued by the prospect of learning a new teaching strategy. Their responses to questions concerning their motivation for adding the workshop load to an already full schedule indicated that they were very interested in alternatives to their current teaching strategies. They expected their students would enjoy a supplement to their existing routines, but at the same time they feared that classroom management problems might result from any deviation from the instructional norm. They expected that a

workshop would enable them to learn both instructional and management strategies.

### TRAINING DESIGN

The dramatic activities workshops were structured using a model prepared by Joyce and Showers (Joyce and Showers, 1981; 1983; Showers 1982). This model incorporates five essential training components: 1. introduction to the theory underlying a teaching strategy; 2. modelling of the strategy; 3. opportunity to practice the strategy; 4. feedback on the practice; and 5. coaching as teachers implemented the strategy in their own classrooms.

The dramatic activities workshops reflected all five of the Joyce/Showers elements, but they provided explicit social and emotional support for developing an instructional alternative to traditional classroom activities.

Theories underlying a given dramatic activity were presented as the trainer discussed the reasons for using a given activity. Modelling occurred as trainees participated in several demonstrations of the activity. Further modelling took place as the demonstrations were discussed, or debriefed. Trainees were then given an assignment to plan a dramatic activity for one of their own classes. A training manual provided explicit instructions regarding the planning assignment and trainees were expected to have a

draft of a lesson plan to practice teach in the following training workshop.

At that next workshop session, trainees taught their lesson to a small group of peers. This practice session provided an opportunity for immediate feedback from other trainees, as well from the trainer, regarding their work. Coaching occurred during the planning phase when trainees met with the trainer to discuss their practice session and to revise their original plans before teaching the lesson to their own classes. Classroom coaching was provided when observers shared their observations and comments with the trainees and when the entire group of trainees met to debrief each classroom teaching assignment.

Absent from the Joyce/Showers model, but essential to this particular training design was an emphasis on emotional support during a potentially stressful learning process. As mentioned previously, the trainees were already burdened by a heavy teaching load, plus an academic coursework load. In addition, the trainees were somewhat fearful of the managerial problems alternative teaching strategies might produce.

The trainer deliberately emphasized the social and emotional support of the training/ learning process in four ways. First, participants were repeatedly assured that perfection was not required of anyone as they learned this

new teaching strategy. Second, participants were encouraged to use the training for their own purposes, even if such use seemed to go beyond the "ideal" as defined by the trainer. Third, participants received supportive feedback and encouragement from three observers (in addition to the trainer) and from their peers. Finally, participants were strongly encouraged to express their own feelings and opinions as they worked through the training. Thus, trainees were encouraged to use the workshops to serve their own ends and to work with the trainer to achieve those individual goals.

#### TRAINING WORKSHOPS

The training was divided into four sections that were separated by classroom implementation tasks: 1. warm up exercises in which the trainees accustomed their students to using dramatic activities; 2. simulation of course concepts or processes; 3. role playing, which emphasized the human elements within the curriculum; and 4. a final training assignment, which assessed the trainees abilities to transfer the workshop contents to their own instruction. In this presentation we will summarize the results of each training session, but a more detailed version is available

upon request. Table 1 presents a calendar of the workshop sessions.

TABLE 1.

Training workshop schedule.

January	3rd	Introduction to dramatic activities Introduction to warm-up exercises
	5th	Peer teach warm-up exercises  TEACH WARM UP EXERCISES IN CLASS
	17th	Evaluate classroom use of warm-up exercises Introduction to simulation
	19th	Peer teach simulation  TEACH SIMULATION IN CLASS
	February 9th	Evaluate classroom use of simulation Introduce role play
	16th	Peer teach role play  TEACH ROLE PLAY IN CLASS
March	2nd	Evaluate classroom use of role play Evaluate workshop
		TEACH FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Warm up exercises. The students general attitudes toward the dramatic activities following the warm up exercises are given in Table 2. The stem and leaf distribution (the stem represents the first significant digit in the response, the leaf represents the second

significant digit) compares the trainees' attitudes before and after the classroom implementation of warm up exercises.

TABLE 2.

Attitudes toward using dramatic activities following classroom warm up exercises compared with background information

background: mean = 3.85  
s.d. = .69

warm up: mean = 4.21  
s.d. = .50

stem		
	16	1
	15	1
2	15	0
	14	68
441	14	1334
976	13	799
22	13	3
7	12	

Although one experience was far from sufficient to develop confidence, trainees were generally happy with their first classroom experience with dramatic activity. One of the primary reasons for this was the students' response to dramatic activity. There were few outright negative reactions from the secondary school students and only one incidence of a problem with classroom control. One trainee gathered student impressions of the warm up activity in a list. Her students' impressions ranged from, "Dumb Dee Dub Dumb Dub" to "OK" to "Relaxing and inspiring."

The experience of actually working with drama in the classroom seemed to provide a sense of relief for many of

the trainees. Although there were some problems, they discovered that a deviation from their standard classroom procedures did not produce chabs, nor did it damage their own self esteem. The warm up exercises confirmed some of their expectations of dramatic activities: the students enjoyed the experience and provided a welcome break from classroom routine. Planning, organizing and communicating one's purpose to students replaced classroom management concerns.

Simulation exercises. The simulations were positive experiences for all of the trainees. The stem and leaf comparison given in Table 3 shows an increase in the mean response and also shows that four of the trainees became highly positive (5.0 - 6.0) abou' dramatic activities following the simulation exercise.

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TABLE 3.

Changes in trainees' attitudes toward dramatic activities  
: following the simulation exercises

warm up mean = 4.21  
s.d. = .50

simulation mean = 4.60  
s.d. = .74

stem		
	16	
	15	66
0	15	11
86	14	68
4331	14	124
997	13	9
3	13	2
	12	

---

This second classroom teaching experience helped the trainees to feel successful at carrying off a complex activity that was quite different from their usual method of instruction. Several training factors may have contributed to this success: the training manual provided step-by-step guidance for planning an activity; the trainer provided individual assistance in planning a lesson that related to topics in the given curriculum; and she helped trainees to structure the activities to prevent classroom disruptions.

Student response, however, was a salient factor for the trainees. With the student control questions settled, the teachers began to examine the interactions between dramatic activities and their own classrooms. One trainee discovered that in her class drama gave low achievers a chance to participate in class, "I noticed that all of those bottom level students were much more involved in today's activity than they have been...." One trainee found that her students were capable of original observations, "...my debriefing went extremely well...the best thing was that they came up with responses that I had not particularly expected...."

Trainees reported continued concerns about allocating the correct amount of time for activities, but they also began to focus on the task demands and the changes in their

own responsibilities as their instruction moved from teacher centered to student centered.

A curious dichotomy resulted from this last concern. On one side was the desirability of involving students and creating enjoyable educational experiences; on the other was the uncertainty of students "getting" the material when the teacher did not specify what there was to "get." As one trainee commented, "they seemed to understand the poem, but not as well as I would have liked." At this point the trainees had no experiential base from which to assess students' learning from dramatic enactment.

In general, the experience with simulation was a very positive for the trainees. They felt that the dramatic activities helped them to see a new side of student abilities and that the workshop was forcing them to reflect on their own instructional skills and was forcing them to question their motives for choosing instructional methods.

Role play. In Table 4 we see a general increase in the trainees' positive attitudes toward dramatic activities. Note that one trainee appears to be much less satisfied than the others. This trainee decided to remain in the workshop sessions, but to refrain from any classroom teaching with dramatic activity.

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TABLE 4.

Changes in trainees' attitudes following the  
role play / exercises.

simulation mean = 4.60  
s.d. = .74

role play mean = 4.64  
s.d. = .68

	stem	
	161	
66	151	7
11	151	22
86	141	5699
421	141	144
9	131	
2	131	1
	121	

---

Although we see the increase in positive attitudes, the trainees generally expressed dissatisfaction with their classroom use of role play. Four trainees mentioned problems with getting students to cooperate during the role play. Although there were few overt behavior problems, several trainees mentioned that students questioned the value of the role play. These problems did not occur during the simulation and trainees felt that perhaps students were resisting the more personal nature of the role play.

Five trainees mentioned problems related to the debriefing. Three did not allow sufficient time to debrief, two were upset with their inability to connect the role play to the curriculum effectively. At this point we can see that three teaching skills embedded within a dramatic

activity have caused problems for the trainees: planning, debriefing, and the communication of purpose.

At this point in the workshops the trainees began to examine their teaching abilities as they related to the activities they planned and the interactions within the classroom. They began to reflect on their mistakes and to learn from those mistakes, "[I have more] confidence in my ability to plan despite the fact that the role play didn't go well," "[the role play] has made me acutely aware of timing ...[and]the need to "read" the class."

The trainees still felt that dramatic activity was beneficial; they indicated that students were interested and active in such lessons, but such lessons must be well planned. The repeated use of dramatic activities helped the trainees overcome any fear of using such activity, but the repetition did more than accustom the trainees to the strategy--it enabled them to reflect on their teaching in general.

By using and analyzing an alternative teaching method, the workshop participants became sensitized to the necessity of teaching skills they had formerly taken as "given". Planning assumed a new importance, as did clarity of purpose. Trainees learned that questions could do more than check for attention in a lecture, that they could guide students' learning from classroom experiences. Most

importantly, the trainees felt they were learning ways of more fully incorporating their students into active learning within the classroom. The final assignment reinforced the conclusions that began to emerge following the role play.

Final assignment. Six students completed the final training assignment. Four other students were exempt from the final assignment because they had to design and teach two separate dramatic activities for Phase II of the study and did not have time to plan a third. The remaining trainee was the trainee mentioned above who decided not to participate in further classroom implementations. As the final stem and leaf diagram shows, trainees' attitudes became slightly less positive after their final experience, but most of this is due to the report of the one trainee who did not teach beyond the simulation.

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TABLE 4.

Comparison of the general attitudes following  
the role play assignment and the final assignment.

role play mean = 4.64  
s.d. = .68

final use mean = 4.53  
s.d. = .77

	stem	
	161	
7	151	6
22	151	03
9965	141	6799
441	141	03
	131	9
1	131	
	121	8

---

The trainees reported two major problems with the final activity: 1. prerequisites for choosing to use a dramatic activity; and 2. flexibility within the activity once it had begun. The former was represented by statements such as, "difficult to visualize which lessons are more beneficial as dramatic activities." The latter was expressed in statements such as, "I have problems seeing how to remedy problems when the activity doesn't work."

In general, the trainees' felt that working with dramatic activities helped them to become more versatile teachers and to become better instructional planners. They were pleased with their students' responses to dramatic activities and they felt that such activities provided "easily comprehensible" examples for their classes. These

feeling are supported by final interviews with the trainees, conducted at the end of the spring quarter, that obtained trainees' perceptions of the entire workshop.

Final interviews. All of the trainees but one participated in the final interviews. The interviews were not conducted by the trainer and, therefore, are less subject to bias than the responses to the attitude surveys.

The trainees felt that dramatic activities were useful alternatives to traditional teaching methods and they all indicated their intentions to use dramatic activities in the future. They felt that such activities were most appropriate for teaching general concepts, but that they were not appropriate for transmitting large amounts of course material. They suggested that dramatic activities were most useful for motivating student involvement, but that dramatic activities were out of the question if one needed to consider the efficient use of class time.

The trainees reported that peer feedback during the practice sessions and the trainer's modelling of dramatic activities were most helpful, but they wished for more intensive classroom coaching. The trainees felt frustration with generating ideas for dramatic activities and with unaided planning, but reported that this frustration had made them more sensitive to their own weaknesses as teachers.

Thus the training workshops influenced the trainees' perceptions in other areas of their teaching. They reported an increased awareness of the positive results of orienting their instruction to include more student participation. They felt that such an orientation required more advance planning and more concentration on classroom discussion than they had executed prior to the workshops. The workshops, they felt, helped them in both of these areas.

**REFLECTIONS:** an analysis of the workshop design and usefulness

This section will recapitulate the results presented earlier, but it will also present new information based on the final interviews with ten of the eleven trainees (one was not available for the final interview) and on the indirect evidence provided by the general evaluations of the Stanford Teacher Education Program. Through this combination of response "in process" and "post process" it will be possible to analyze the training model, to identify strengths and weaknesses within this particular workshop, and to speculate on optimal training designs that will enable teachers to vary their classroom instruction.

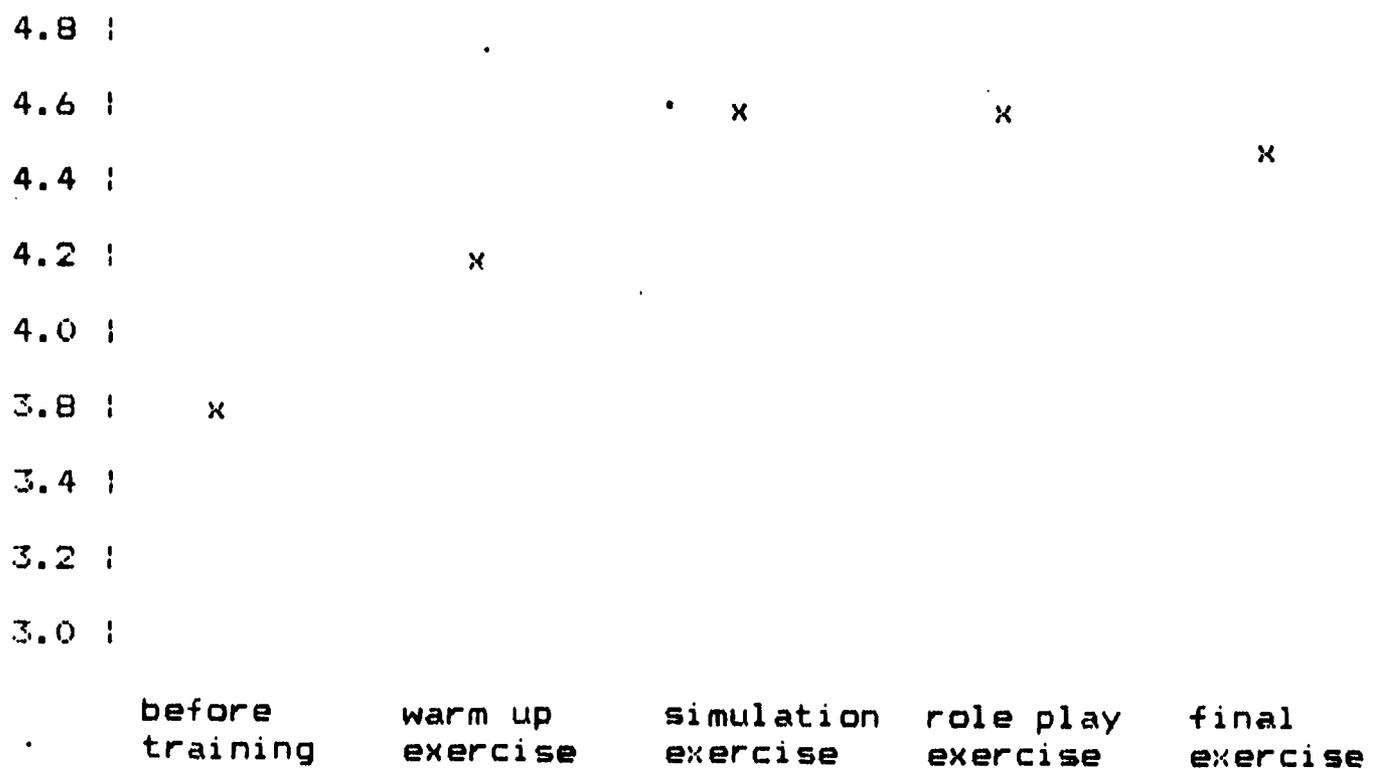


Figure 1. Changes in trainees' general attitudes toward dramatic activities.

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First let us examine the impact of the training on the trainees. Figure 1 shows the changes in trainees attitudes toward dramatic activities throughout the training. The averages reported in in Figure 1 include all of the trainees, even the ones who did not complete all of the training assignments. If these two were deleted, the growth in positive attitudes would be greater. The most obvious result of the training is that the participants' became more familiar with the structure and substance of dramatic activity and that this familiarity contributed to favorable attitudes toward such activities.

A second obvious result is that trainees were able to transfer the skill learned in the workshop to their own classrooms. The final training assignment demonstrated that trainees were indeed able to plan and teach a dramatic activity without external assistance. In the final interview, all of the trainees expressed their intention to use dramatic activities in their teaching.

The final interviews revealed a third result of the training: the participants came to an understanding of when it might be appropriate to incorporate dramatic activities into the curriculum. The participants found dramatic activities particularly useful for teaching general concepts as opposed to specific facts, but they felt that if time were limited they would not use dramatic activities at all. The participants were particularly impressed by the motivational appeal of dramatic activities and by their ability to change the focus of classroom instruction from the teacher to the students.

This introduces a result that is somewhat separate from simply learning about dramatic activities. The participants reported an increased understanding of teaching in general. The final interviews document two strong effects of the training workshops: 1. the participants' increased understanding of the components of a well organized, well planned lesson and their function in producing a successful

classroom experience for the students; and 2. the participants' increased awareness of the benefits of student-centered classrooms.

The workshops stressed planning: planning before peer teaching, planning as a result of peer teaching, and evaluating such plans to improve one's competence with dramatic activities. The participants reported that this was one of the most demanding--and beneficial--exercises they had experienced. The reports throughout the workshop sections support this as trainees repeatedly discussed the necessity for insightful debriefing questions, budgeting sufficient time for an activity and for debriefing, and strategies for including students at all levels in an activity.

Although the workshops did not stress student involvement per se, the nature of dramatic activity demands a high level of student involvement. Throughout the workshop the trainees commented on students' abilities they had not noticed until they began trusting the students with more responsibility for their own learning. Still, the participants were unsure of just what it meant to put students in "control." They could not be certain of what was being learned and they found it difficult to guide the process from the sidelines, especially when the process seemed to be going awry. Uncertainties such as these lead

one to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the training.

The training model was essentially a systems design evolving from the work of educational psychologists who had worked with training design during World War II. The assumption underlying this basic model is that teaching is a skill (or a set of skills) and that demonstration and practice are sufficient for most teachers to acquire the necessary skills.

The element of coaching, first introduced by Joyce and Showers (1981) modifies the basic model as it includes the realization that workshop training is not to teaching as the flight simulator is to the aircraft. The assumption underlying the coaching variation is that all classrooms are unique and that teachers sometimes need assistance in connecting the training recommendations to their particular experiences.

The social-emotional support element was included in this particular workshop to create an atmosphere in which it was permissible to make mistakes, to ask for help, and to publicly rejoice in small, as well as large, successes. The assumption underlying this variation is that teachers, particularly pre-service teachers, are vulnerable people who are hurt by failure, even when that failure might be necessary to subsequent growth.

The final interviews with the trainees provided some insight into the basic model and its variations. The trainees confirmed the basic model as they identified the peer teaching sessions, the modeling, and the practice teaching sessions as contributing the most to their competence using dramatic activities. They confirmed the importance of coaching in their requests that the classroom observers do more than record events and provide indirect feedback. They asked for active classroom assistance from either the trainer or some cadre of skilled training assistants. But perhaps the most interesting feedback on the training model relates to the variation that includes the social-emotional element.

In a quarter long series of workshops, given during the busiest quarter for preservice teachers, one might expect a drop out rate of ten to fifty percent. In this workshop there were no "drop outs." Given eleven trainees and four classroom teaching assignments (a total of forty-four possible assignments), only three assignments were not completed. Since there was no grade for participation, no university credit, and no financial compensation for time, something was operating to keep the participants actively involved. It is highly probable that this "something" was a combination of trainer/observer support for individual

concerns; peer support for achieving success; and a general feeling that the workshops were worthwhile experiences.

Still, when one examines all three indicators of trainees' attitudes and perceived competence one confronts the fact that trainees were not anywhere near ceiling. Although the workshops attracted and retained volunteers, they did not develop perceived expertise in using dramatic activities. There are several possible explanations for this.

The first is that preservice teachers are simply not capable of achieving expertise in a complex teaching alternative. The second is that the training was not powerful enough, that more coaching, more practice, more "whatever" would push more trainees to ceiling. The third possibility is that classroom ecology works against deviations from the traditional, that teachers and students subtly conspire to keep classroom life "familiar" and therefore comfortable. A final possibility is that teachers are acutely aware that mistakes on their part have detrimental effects on their students and therefore seek to avoid experiences that highlight pedagogical mistakes.

To decide among the possibilities or even to examine them more closely is beyond the scope of the Phase I study. But, as we reflect on the training model, it is useful to consider what factors are left out of the systems design and

its variations. A systems design can provide "more." Through systems analysis one can break a training design into both training components and design components, search for deficiencies and apply corrective action. A systems design can also differentiate between the learning/skills capacity of preservice teachers and experienced teachers. It is easy to imagine an experimental comparison between teachers in training and teachers with five to ten years of classroom experience and to imagine all of the potential results of such a comparison.

The systems approach encounters a problem when factors external to the training are considered--factors such as classroom ecology and teachers' latitude to "learn on the job." In order to examine any form of ecological effect the trainer must do more than "coach" in a given situation; she must understand the nature of that situation and she must provide the trainee with means to change the situation if that is what is called for.

Such training calls to mind something far removed from the typical "inservice workshop" or even the extensive training provided in Phase I. Trainers would need to provide teachers with ways of "reading" the classroom to understand all the changes that might occur when an instructional activity changes--role changes, changes in

dominance hierarchies, shifts in rewards, or major changes in the patterns of learning and how to evaluate them.

This implies that trainers would have the ability to "read" classrooms themselves, that they could not stop at "modelling" or "feedback" or even "coaching" and that social-emotional support could not be limited to the training content. Potential trainers would need to work with, or even within, schools and classrooms, serving as "expert" clinicians. Such a training design would be costly and perhaps highly impractical, but it is worth considering as an alternative to the current model. If producing viable alternatives to traditional instruction is an important educational goal, then the consideration of diverse ways to attain that goal is certainly worthy of study.

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