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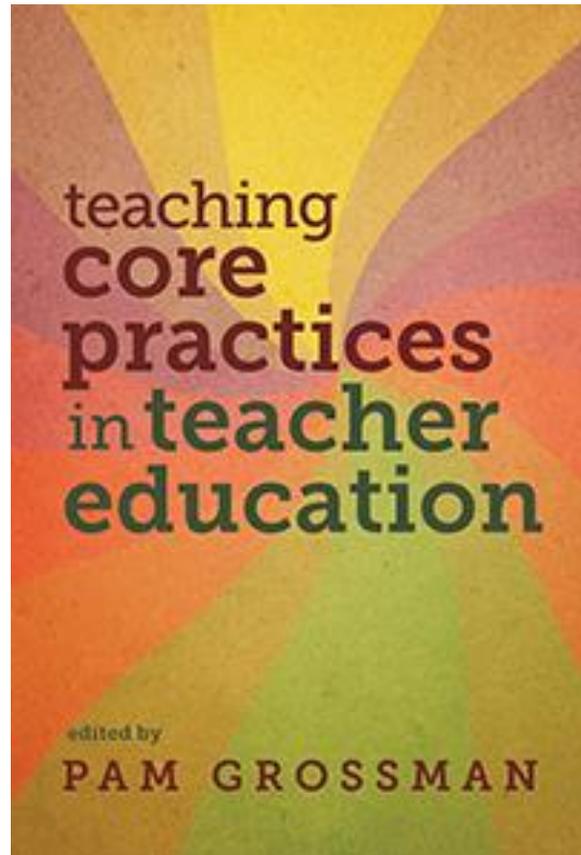
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Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education, edited by Pam Grossman, is a valuable contribution to the discussion of core teaching practices and the role that they can play in the formation of new teachers. Geared primarily toward teacher educators, the book lays out an argument for the value of practice-based education, followed by chapters suggesting a number of ways to embed the study and enactment of core practices in teacher education programs.

To begin the book, Grossman and two of her co-authors describe the work of the Core Practice Consortium (CPC). The consortium, a group of teacher educators and researchers from various disciplines representing eleven institutions from around the country, has been engaged in their collective work since 2012. Their collaborative approach involves working toward a common language for and understanding of core practices, and “how best to support novice teachers in developing more ambitious teaching through focusing on a set of practices or instructional activities” (p. 8). *Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education* aims to synthesize what the participants in the



CPC have learned about practice-based teacher education as a result of their research and collaboration.

Core practices is a term used to describe an idea that's been defined in different ways by researchers and teacher educators. While the term *core practices* may differ slightly (for example, TeachingWorks at the University of Michigan uses the term *high leverage practices*), it encompasses the same idea. The CPC's definition is "Identifiable components of teaching that teachers enact to support learning. These components include instructional strategies and the subcomponents of routines and moves. Core practices can include both general and content-specific practices" (p.184).

Additionally, the authors acknowledge that no single set of agreed-upon core practices exists. They mention core practices of varying grain sizes and practices that are designed to cross content areas as well as those that are specific to disciplines. The appendix includes a helpful sample of core practices.

In discussing the history of the core practices movement, Grossman and her co-authors make mention of the cyclical nature of teacher education in the United States. Although the current conception of core practices may be introducing some novel ways to support teacher candidates, the focus on practice is not a new one. There have also been shifts in the other direction, such as the knowledge-based approach in the 1980s and 1990s, in which teacher candidates had few opportunities to practice deploying their knowledge. In that light, it would have been beneficial for the authors to dwell on the idea of educational shifts a bit more. While the individual chapters each highlight success stories, and the book's coda features commentary from a few CPC members about their positive experiences, the book would have been strengthened by the inclusion of an explanation of what makes this current focus on core practices different than any other

swing of the educational pendulum, and what will give it sticking power.

Throughout the book the authors emphasize the need to develop language around practices and have a myriad of opportunities to "unpack" practice. They also stress that teacher candidates need to be able to try on the various strategies and teacher moves through approximations of practice. This type of intentional work pushes back on the assumption that many of these core practices are inherent in good teachers. Practices that are core to effective teaching can put students at risk if done poorly, so it is imperative to discard the idea that teacher candidates will reliably learn them on their own.

One important means for making core practices visible and accessible is the use of representations of practice, the focus of Chapters 2 and 3. Meaningful selection and use of videos, transcripts, lesson plans, and modeling are presented, with a discussion of the affordances of each and the aspects of practice that they help to make visible. The next two chapters discuss the use of approximations of practice, which provide teacher candidates the opportunity to "try on" teacher moves. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of debriefing opportunities, which allow for a continued discussion about the specific teacher moves being studied. The final two chapters of the book provide an overview of how core practices might fit into teacher education curricula, as well as extending beyond work with teacher candidates to the larger population of practicing teachers.

One key strength of the book is the examples provided throughout each of the implementation chapters. After outlining a particular approach to embedding work with core practices, the authors of each chapter share real-world examples of how that work has been done in varying settings. These vignettes are a powerful tool for helping

readers to conceptualize what the work could look like in their own setting, whether they want to infuse more practice-based experiences into their existing coursework or are ready to revamp entire courses or even programs. For example, in chapter 7, we learn how Megan Shaughnessy, an elementary mathematics methods instructor, revamped a course activity focusing on mathematical discussions. Teacher candidates complete the math themselves and then watch a video of a math discussion of the work. In order to make it more practice-based, Shaughnessy then has them work in small groups to practice taking on the role of the teacher and facilitating a conclusion to the discussion. It is easy to see how this activity became more meaningful and beneficial for teacher candidates through this combination of representations and approximations of teaching. This example and the many others in the book are powerful tools for increasing the likelihood that the ideas presented are actually taken up by readers.

Another thread that connects each of the chapters, and is a strength of the book and the argument for practice-based programs, is the discussion of core practices as a means for increasing social justice in classrooms. The authors share two types of thinking regarding this idea. One is connected to the research indicating the crucial role that teachers play in students' educational experiences. If the goal of a practice-based teacher education program is to develop teaching candidates that are better able to bridge the gap between theory and practice, then teacher candidates who graduate from those programs will be better able to navigate the complex intellectual and social aspects of teaching. The presence of competent teachers is particularly important for students who may typically be underserved by the current educational systems, such as those in minority groups. As Kristine Schutz, a teacher educator and one of the authors of chapter 6 explained:

To me, it is an issue of equity that unprepared teachers are placed in the classrooms of our most vulnerable populations. I see practice-based teacher education as a way of ensuring that new teachers provide all children, but especially those from traditionally marginalized populations, the kind of instruction, love, and respect they deserve. (p. 131)

A second connection between practice-based programs and social justice is the forwarding of equity-minded instruction. As stated in the book, "The CPC attends to issues of equity in education by building a vision of teaching that takes students' emotional, social, and intellectual resources seriously in disciplinary learning. The CPC takes the view that teachers' actions are consequential for countering longstanding inequities in the school experience of children, particularly youth from marginalized communities" (p. 13). Throughout the book the authors share examples of how they have leveraged their work with core practices to help teacher candidates be more aware of social justice issues and begin designing instructional activities that foreground an appreciation for their diverse student populations. Excellent examples of this can be found in chapter 6, "Core Practices and the Teacher Education Curriculum: Stories of Practice." In this chapter Ashley Cartun shares her experiences modeling Writer's Workshop methods through the careful selection of mentor texts that highlight key writing skills while also challenging dominant narratives and introducing students to a more diverse set of ideas. Kristine Schutz describes how she utilizes "the power of disruption through counternarratives" (p. 127) by intentionally choosing texts that attend to equity concepts when teaching reading strategies in her literacy methods courses. The focus is not just on literacy pedagogies, but on developing anti-racist and justice-oriented teaching practices. Such a focus on social justice is always

relevant and is increasingly critical for educators to discuss and to make a hallmark of their classrooms.

Taken as a whole, *Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education* is a story of what can happen as a result of collaboration. By sharing their work through this book, the CPC hoped to expand the conversation on practice-based approaches to teacher education with a wider group of educators, therefore providing new opportunities for collaboration. These future collaborations will continue to develop educators' understanding of core teaching

practices and their ability to use them to develop robust programs that prepare teaching candidates for the work of teaching while fostering equity and social justice. Those who are seeking to strengthen teacher education programs will find this an informative read and helpful starting place. Indeed, considering the potential that core practices have to empower pre-service teachers to be better equipped educators, this book would make excellent required reading for faculty and administrators in all teacher education programs.

About the Reviewer

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