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Seven Strategies for Dealing With the Social Side of Teaching

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Introduction

Imagine a first-year teacher in a high-school science classroom. The teacher holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry, and has successfully completed student teaching, passed the state certification examination, and received a teaching license. Two months into the school year, the teacher is beginning to develop a good relationship with the students. One day, a student approaches the teacher after class and asks if the teacher would like to go grab some coffee after school. How should the teacher deal with this situation?

Now, think about a middle-school teacher who has been asked by the principal to prepare a teaching portfolio for evaluation. Over the course of several weeks, the teacher devotes a tremendous amount of time and energy outside of the classroom pulling the packet together. The teacher submits the portfolio to the principal thinking that it is a good piece of work and that the principal will really like it. When the teacher receives feedback from the principal, the teacher is disappointed to find that the portfolio received an evaluation of "average" as opposed to "excellent" or even "good." How should the teacher deal with this situation?

Finally, consider an elementary-school teacher who is engaged in a phone call with an angry parent. The teacher called the parent to discuss possible reasons why the parent's child might have performed so poorly on the last reading exam. In the middle of the conversation, the parent begins launching personal attacks against the teacher. How should the teacher deal with this situation?

When most people are asked to think of what it means to teach, their minds immediately conjure up images related to instruction. One might envision a teacher giving a lecture or walking around the room and supervising students who have broken up into smaller workgroups. Yet, there is much more to teaching than instruction.

What the three scenarios described at the beginning of this paper all have in common is that they represent the kinds of social situations encountered by teachers that they are usually never formally taught how to handle. But social interactions such as those described constitute a large and important part of the day-to-day experience of teaching. Nevertheless, most teachers have received little preparation as to how they might consider dealing with these situations.

In this paper, we will discuss three main ideas. First, we will examine traditional approaches to teacher preparation, and argue that teacher-preparation programs currently tend to train teachers mostly on issues related to instruction. We propose that teacher-preparation programs would benefit from expanding their focus to include explicit instruction on practical skills for dealing with social interactions with others. Second, we will outline a framework for developing practical skills in teachers that will prepare them to effectively deal with parents, administrators, students, and other teachers. Third, we will discuss how these practical skills can be measured.

Teacher Preparation

The role of the teacher has been conceptualized in many different ways over time. For example, there are differences in people's assumptions about the skills that are necessary in order to be qualified to teach (Wilson & Floden, 2003), about whether teaching is a profession (Gordon, 2002) or a vocation (Schwarz, 1998), and about whether the role of the teacher is to act as an expert or a guide (Schiro, 1978). Many programs, research studies, and educational philosophies give the impression that teaching is tantamount to instruction (Teach for America, 2003; Stigler, Gonzales, Kawanaka, Knoll, & Serrano, 1999). Within the context of such a paradigm, anything that interferes with instructional time is seen as counterproductive to the primary aim of the teacher. Fire drills, announcements, behavioral problems in class, and other such disruptions all hinder teachers from fulfilling their primary objective of instructing students within the context of a particular content domain. Teacher-preparation programs also have tended to focus mainly on preparing teachers for instructional delivery. Most programs emphasize three key elements:

(a) subject-matter preparation, (b) pedagogical preparation, and (c) student teaching (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001).

Although we agree that these three elements are important, we will argue in this paper for the inclusion of a fourth, equally important, element that has traditionally been overlooked within the context of teacher-preparation programs: the development of practical skills in dealing with others. In this first section, we will begin with a brief review of the strengths and limitations of subject-matter preparation, pedagogical preparation, and student teaching. We will then make the case for the importance of including within teacher-preparation programs explicit instruction related to practical skills.

Subject-Matter Preparation

In 1997, the results from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) showed that U.S. students were much more likely than their international counterparts to be instructed by teachers who were teaching outside of their primary subject areas (Beaton et al., 1997; Mullis et al., 1997). In other words, American teachers appear to lack the very expertise they are expected, by conventional beliefs, to possess—that of content knowledge. The implications of this finding have led policymakers to focus on policies designed to ensure that U.S. teachers have mastered their subject areas. Indeed, shortly after the TIMSS findings were released, many state departments of education showed a renewed interest in policies related to teacher testing (Ludlow, Shirley, & Rosca, 2002). All states now require future teachers to pass a certification examination to demonstrate knowledge within a particular content area. “With the reauthorization of Title II of the Higher Education Act (Public Law 105-244) in 1998, states are now required to report to the United States Department of Education on how well their teacher education program completers fared on teacher tests. This legislation, in effect, federalized teacher testing” (Ludlow et al., 2002). Passage of the test alone is usually not enough to guarantee certification. Aspiring teachers are also required to spend a prescribed amount of time in the classroom student-teaching under the supervision of a certified instructor. However, failing the

examination of content-area knowledge is sufficient to prohibit a candidate from receiving a certification to teach. Thus, federal policies give priority to the idea that teachers need to exhibit content area mastery.

In recent years, one of the most popular programs related to teacher preparation has been Teach for America. Chartered in 1990, this program seeks out recent college graduates whose majors are relevant to a particular content area (e.g., English literature). It issues these candidates an emergency teaching credential so that they can go into failing inner-city schools to teach (Teach for America, 2003). Prior to their placement, Teach for America participants attend a summer institute to discuss effective teaching practices. They are then placed into an urban classroom setting for a 2-year period. In 2003, only 2% of the incoming corps of teachers involved in the program held a degree in education. During the 2003–2004 academic year, approximately 3,300 Teach for America participants were credentialed to instruct approximately 280,000 students nationwide. The minimal level of preparation provided by the program, coupled with the low number of participants with a background in education, suggests that the underlying assumption of the Teach for America program is that content area mastery is sufficient to ensure that a person will be capable of transmitting knowledge to his or her students.

Although subject-area mastery seems like a reasonable requirement, research has shown that the mere possession of knowledge does not necessarily imply that a person will be able to successfully transmit this knowledge to others (Bower, 2000; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2000; Sternberg, Torff, & Grigorenko, 1998a; Zeedyk, Wallace, Carcary, Jones, & Larter, 2001). Thus, whereas a certain level of subject-matter preparation is certainly necessary for effective teaching, it is not sufficient. There are other important factors to take into account, such as pedagogical preparation.

Pedagogical Preparation

Schools of education have long recognized that subject-matter preparation by itself is not enough to make a good teacher (Wilson et al., 2001). In addition to mastery of a content area,

good teachers need sound preparation in instructional methods, learning theories, foundations of education, and classroom management (i.e., pedagogical preparation). An examination of the curricula of most education schools today reveals a heavy emphasis on classes related to curriculum theory and educational philosophy (Wilson & Floden, 2003).

There are many different philosophies of education, and many different pedagogical techniques (Noddings, 1995; Reed & Johnson, 1996; Tyler, 1990). Yet, for better or worse, people are often bound by their own experiences. Thus, without an understanding of the evidence of the effectiveness of different approaches to pedagogy, most teachers would likely tend to teach in the same way that they were taught. Good teachers should recognize that there are many different approaches to education, and that there are different philosophies regarding the purpose of school and the role of the teacher.

Research has also demonstrated that students learn differently (Schmeck & Geisler-Brenstein, 1989; Sternberg, 1998; Walberg & Wang, 1987). Consequently, a teacher with a wider repertoire of pedagogical skills will ultimately be better able to help students achieve (Entwistle, 2001; Sprenger, 2003; Sternberg, Grigorenko, Ferrari, & Clinkenbeard, 1999; Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Jarvin, 2002; Sternberg, Torff, & Grigorenko, 1998b).

Nevertheless, a teacher might possess incredible amounts of knowledge, and be able to implement a dazzling display of instructional methods; but if he or she cannot get students to listen and to pay attention, students cannot be taught effectively. Plato noted this fact over two thousand years ago in *The Republic*, when Polemarchus says to Socrates, “But can you persuade us, if we refuse to listen to you?” Glaucon replies simply, “Certainly not” (Plato, 1991). Thus, creating an environment in which students are open to listening is critical to instruction.

As Kathleen McLane, the Associate Director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Education, has noted, “For over a quarter of a century, the number one concern facing public schools in this country has been discipline” (McLane, 1997). Part of the rise in attention to behavioral management may be attributed to the rising number of students who are being identified as

having learning disabilities (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 1999). In the past 10 years, there has been a surge in the number of students who have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder and other behaviorally-based disorders that can interfere with teachers' attempts to instruct students (Kauffman & Wong, 1991). At the same time, the movements toward mainstreaming education and full inclusion have required that these students be placed into the same classrooms as the rest of the student body. Thus, in the 1980s, theories of behavioral management began to gain increased attention in educational literature (Harlan & Rowland, 2002). Techniques for disciplining students and for dealing with misbehavior were studied and outlined as part of the teacher's repertoire.

Behavioral-management theories have provided useful strategies for dealing with certain social interactions; however, the application of these strategies is limited in scope. Specifically, behavioral-management strategies are focused upon dealing with students, as opposed to administrators or parents, and are typically reserved for instructional settings, as opposed to extracurricular settings. Thus, although teachers receive some preparation in how to handle social interactions with students, the preparation is typically restricted to interactions with difficult students in the context of classroom instruction. The kinds of practical skills required of teachers on a day-to-day basis, however, reach well beyond the techniques prescribed by behavioral management. Consequently, we believe that teacher-preparation programs should consider broadening their focus to include some preparation related to practical skills for dealing with social situations.

Practical-Skills Preparation

Teaching is an inherently social activity. In addition to the constant interactions that teachers have with their students, there is also a wide variety of interactions that they have with parents, administrators, and other teachers. How teachers react to different social situations arising in the context of teaching has traditionally been attributed to individual differences between teachers in terms of personality, background, style, or other personal characteristics (Mills, 2003; Stronge, 2002; Wentzel, 2002). Recently, however, there has been some movement toward rec-

ognizing the importance of social-competence development (Elias, Wang, Weissberg, Zins, & Walberg, 2002). Indeed, social intelligence has been shown to be distinct from more analytical types of intelligence (Barnes & Sternberg, 1989; Chen & Michael, 1993; Marlowe, 1986; Sternberg & Smith, 1985; Wong, Day, Maxwell, & Meara, 1995). Furthermore, there appear to be at least two dimensions to the construct of social intelligence. One dimension is related to more declarative knowledge (i.e., knowing what to do in a certain situation), and the other is related more closely to procedural knowledge (i.e., actually acting that way in a situation). In order to begin to help teachers develop social intelligence, it would be useful to structure programs that will help teachers develop both declarative and procedural aspects of social intelligence.

To date, work in the area of social development has been targeted largely at developing the social skills of students rather than teachers. To our knowledge, there are no programs that are targeted at developing the practical skills of teachers. Consequently, we believe that the time is ripe for teacher-preparation programs to consider offering systematic preparation in potential strategies for dealing with social situations (i.e., provide declarative knowledge). Student teachers can then attempt to practice these strategies during the course of their student teaching, thereby turning declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge, and helping the teachers to be better prepared for the multiple social demands of teaching.

Student Teaching

Student teaching is often regarded as a powerful element of teacher preparation (Wilson et al., 2001). Through their student teaching, teachers have the opportunity to observe practicing teachers and model their instructional techniques. Indeed, social learning theory has shown that informal instruction in the form of behavioral modeling can be just as powerful as formal didactic instruction in influencing people's cognitions and behaviors (Bandura, 1986; Miller & Dollard, 1941).

In addition, student teaching provides an opportunity for student teachers to apply the lessons learned from their teacher-preparation program within the context of an actual classroom.

Perhaps the major benefit to student teaching is that it affords student teachers the opportunity to turn declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge. Indeed, one purpose of student teaching is for student teachers to practice implementing the instructional knowledge gained from their teacher-preparation programs. If this mechanism works for instruction, then it seems that it would also be useful for practical skills. Yet, without some base of declarative knowledge from which to draw, student teachers are left with no standardized framework for dealing with social interactions. Consequently, the strategies for dealing with social interactions that teachers use will be largely acquired via social learning during their student teaching or through experience on the job (Sternberg et al., 2000). We propose that at least some of this tacit knowledge can be taught within the context of a teacher-preparation program and would be highly beneficial in preparing student teachers.

Interim Summary

In summary, conventional approaches to teacher preparation have traditionally emphasized the importance of three elements: subject-matter preparation, pedagogical preparation, and student teaching (Wilson & Floden, 2003; Wilson et al., 2001). Each of these three elements is important and is related primarily to the instructional aspect of teaching.

There is more to teaching than instruction, however; teaching is a social enterprise. Curiously, there are currently no existing programs of which we are aware that attempt explicitly to instruct teachers on the development of practical skills for dealing with social interactions. Yet, social intelligence has been empirically validated as a construct distinct from analytical intelligence, and has been shown to consist of a declarative aspect and a procedural aspect. Therefore, student teaching could provide an opportunity for novice teachers to both acquire new skills via social learning, and to practice the application of their procedural knowledge. In the absence of explicit instruction within the domain of practical skills, teachers will likely exhibit a limited repertoire of actions that replicate those produced by their teacher mentor or other role models from their past. Thus, rather than relying on pre-existing individual differences in teachers' personality,

style, or intellect to predict how they will solve social problems, we argue that it would be better for teacher-preparation programs to consider offering systematic preparation in potential strategies for dealing with social situations. Student teachers can then attempt to implement these strategies during the course of their student teaching to help them be better prepared for the multiple social demands of teaching.

Developing Practical Skills in Teachers

Teacher-preparation programs have traditionally prepared teachers well for handling the instructional aspect of teaching. Yet, there is more to the act of teaching than just the delivery of formal instruction. Teachers must deal with a dizzying number of social interactions on a daily basis; however, teachers typically receive little formal preparation to help them consider approaches to dealing with the variety of social situations they will encounter both inside and outside of the classroom.

Some evidence of the importance of the social side of teaching can be found in the numerous books that provide advice and survival tips to teachers (Glasgow & Hicks, 2003; Kane, 1991). Although such books often provide helpful tips on how to deal with certain situations, their major limitation is that they do not tend to be based on any underlying theoretical framework that can help teachers to conceptualize how to deal systematically with such interactions.

In this part of the paper, we begin by discussing the theoretical basis of teaching for practical skills. We then unpack and more fully review the literature related to one particular aspect of practical skills: that of dealing with others. Finally, we present a framework of strategies for dealing with others that were empirically derived from current work with teachers.

Theoretical Framework

According to Sternberg's theory of successful intelligence (Sternberg, 1997, 1999), intelligence is composed of analytical, creative, and practical skills. Analytical skills are typically involved when components are applied to relatively familiar kinds of problems where the judgments to be made are fairly abstract in nature. Creative skills are particularly well-suited to

problems in which the individual must cope with relative novelty. Practical skills involve applying intelligence to the kinds of problems that are confronted in everyday life.

Within the context of teaching, practical skills are especially important. Teachers must be able to communicate their ideas effectively during instruction. In addition, however, teachers must be able to adapt to a wide variety of situations that call upon their social perceptiveness. According to Sternberg and his colleagues, practical skills can be further decomposed into three subcomponents: (a) dealing with self, (b) dealing with others, and (c) dealing with tasks (Grigorenko, Gil, Jarvin, & Sternberg, unpublished; Sternberg et al., 2000). For the remainder of this paper, we will turn our attention toward discussing the development of practical skills that relate to the process of dealing with others.

Dealing With Others

Research related to strategies for dealing with others has been largely carried out within two fields. The first field is that of social-competence development and social problem solving; the second field is that of conflict resolution. Much of the work in the area of social problem solving has looked at the impact of developing social competence in students (Elias, Rothbaum, & Gara, 1986; Pettit, Dodge, & Brown, 1989). These studies have found that students' social competence is predictive of classroom competence, again highlighting the importance of social interactions in school settings.

Researchers in the area of conflict resolution have traditionally focused on describing particular response styles for dealing with these conflict scenarios. For example, Sternberg and Soriano (1984) proposed the existence of seven different modes of conflict resolution: physical action, economic action, wait and see, accept the situation, step-down, third-party intervention, and undermine esteem. Later, work by Sternberg and Dobson (1987) included other strategies in addition to those used by Sternberg and Soriano. Using factor-analytic techniques to reduce the number of dimensions for the various strategies, Sternberg and Dobson arrived at four factors

underlying the styles. They labeled these factors active/mitigate, active/intensify, passive/mitigate, and passive/intensify.

Following this tradition, other researchers have attempted to classify conflict-resolution strategies in various ways. For example, Pruitt and Rubin (1986) and Carnevale and Pruitt (1992) articulated four strategies: (a) Inaction: "when disputants do not care about their own or others' outcomes"; (b) Yield: "when they are concerned with the others' outcomes, but not their own"; (c) Contending: "when they are primarily concerned with their own interests"; and (d) Dual concern: "when disputants are concerned both about their own interests and the others' as well." In addition, Selman (1980) and Weitzman and Weitzman (2000) talk about four levels of conflict-resolution strategy: (a) Egocentric: impulsive and self-centered; (b) Unilateral: obedient, but self-interested; (c) Reciprocal: exchange-oriented; and (d) Mutual: collaborative.

Overall, work in the area of conflict resolution provides a useful basis for thinking about strategies for dealing with interpersonal interactions. Yet, work in this area exhibits three limitations for the present purposes. First, not all social encounters contain an element of conflict. Some social encounters are benign, yet they still require strategies for interaction. Second, the majority of the work on conflict-resolution strategies has been framed in terms of intentions rather than in terms of behaviors. For example, one may intend to escalate the situation, but the specific action one takes to advance this goal may not achieve the desired effect. Third, research on conflict resolution has focused mainly on styles as opposed to strategies. Strategies are options for handling a particular social interaction that occurs within a particular context. Styles are preferred strategies that an individual will endorse across situations. Thus, the emphasis in the field of conflict resolution has tended to be on the interaction between strategies and the personality characteristics of the actor, rather than on the interaction between which strategies are most relevant in a particular situational context.

In the next section of this paper, we will outline an alternative approach to thinking about practical strategies for dealing with others.

Seven Strategies for Dealing With Social Situations

Using Sternberg's theory of successful intelligence as a guide, we conducted structured interviews with teachers and asked them to describe situations they had encountered during their teaching that they were never formally taught how to handle. For the purposes of our project, we focused on the second aspect of practical intelligence: dealing with others. During the course of the project, we further refined the theory by breaking the category of dealing with others into three component parts: (a) dealing with supervisors (e.g., principals), (b) dealing with peers (e.g., other teachers), and (c) dealing with subordinates (e.g., students).

We asked each of the teachers we interviewed to give us specific situational examples of times when they had to deal with problems involving people from one of the three categories, and how they handled the situation. We then asked them to think about other possible ways of handling the situation. One of the main goals of this portion of the project was to develop some systematic and theoretical approach to the development of response options. After compiling the information provided by teachers, as well as those potential responses generated by our research group, we conducted a content analysis of the responses (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Stemler, 2001) to look for trends across the different situations. The result of this effort was that we arrived at seven strategies for dealing with social situations that seemed to apply across all items related to dealing with others: avoid, confer, consult, comply, delegate, legislate, and retaliate. The purpose of defining and articulating these strategies is to provide teachers with a palette of potential courses of action from which they can choose and upon which they can reflect when dealing with social encounters or social problem solving. We will now discuss each strategy in further detail.

Avoid. One common strategy that people use within the context of social interactions, especially those that require social problem solving, is to take no action whatsoever. Avoiding the situation can take the form of simply ignoring the problem as it is presented or of not attending to the situation. Thus, one essentially disengages oneself from the scenario altogether. Depending on

the situation, avoidance could take the form of denial (e.g., “There is no problem; nobody is talking to me”) or procrastination (e.g., “I will answer your questions about the exam later”). For example, if a teacher received a lower evaluation of his or her portfolio than desired, the teacher might just drop the issue and move on. There are several potential subtypes of avoidance. For example, a person who is acting as a martyr might stay in the situation and complain about it to others, but take no direct action to resolve the problem. A person who chooses to grin and bear it may stay in a situation he or she is not happy with, but not complain about it, and ultimately take no action. Avoidance strategies are sometimes desirable, however, if one perceives that a problem might resolve itself, or that there is no rush to find a solution and that sufficient information for a solution is not yet available but might later become available.

Confer. A second strategy for dealing with social problem solving is to discuss the issue within the context of a more intimate and private sphere. In other words, the assumption underlying this approach is that some problems are best solved at the private, one-on-one level, without the social pressures and potential embarrassment associated with discussing an issue within the public sphere. The approach requires the person to be verbally direct and confront the source of any problem. For example, if a principal is critical of a certain teacher’s work, the teacher could explain his or her point of view to the principal. The confer strategy is based on the premise that rational thought dominates human interactions. If people can understand the reasons that you make the decisions that you do, then they will be more willing to see your side. Furthermore, it assumes that it is worth taking the time to explain your reasoning to people with whom you are having a problem. A key feature of the confer strategy is that the participant may or may not be open to changing his or her viewpoint. In other words, one subcategory of the confer strategy might be the “my way or the highway” approach. For example, if a parent expresses some concern about the curriculum a teacher is following, the teacher may explain to the parent the reason she chose the curriculum, but that she is not willing to compromise or change that curriculum. The teacher has explained her reasoning, and that is the end of the story. The key characteristic of

the confer strategy is that an attempt is made for the two parties interacting to have a rational and private discussion.

Consult. A third popular strategy for dealing with interpersonal interactions is to appeal to a third party for advice. Consulting could take the form of asking another person for advice on how to deal with a particular situation, or it could take the form of asking all of the parties affected by a decision to get together and collaborate on potential solutions to a problem. A key feature of the consultation strategy is that the decision maker is reaching out to an external third party and asking that individual or group to work together to solve the problem rather than asking the third party to solve the problem for the decision maker. For example, if a teacher notices that more and more responsibilities are being assigned to him or her, the teacher may ask a colleague (fellow teacher) for advice about how to deal with the situation. The decision maker does not abdicate responsibility for dealing with the situation (cf., *Delegate*), but rather seeks outside counsel that will help the teacher to solve the problem for him or herself.

Comply. A fourth common strategy people use during social interactions is simply to comply with whatever is asked of them. Here, the decision maker in the scenario will comply with any request, regardless of whether it comes from a supervisor (e.g., principal), a peer (e.g., another teacher), or a subordinate (e.g., a student). At times, this approach to social problem solving suggests that the person should not make waves, and that even if a course of action is undesirable or may have negative consequences in the long term, the respondent should simply comply in order to make life easier in the short term. To some extent, this strategy may reflect a desire to avoid confrontation or an uncomfortable situation. Again, there may be various levels of compliance. For example, a person may "go along" with a course of action just because he or she does not want to deal with the situation, or the individual may comply because of a belief in the idea. The individual therefore may decide to convince others of the idea's merits. For example, suppose a principal sends around an E-mail asking for teachers to participate in a voluntary research project on cooperative learning. The project would last 4 weeks and take up 20 minutes of class

time per day. The teacher could comply with the request, and participate in the project for a variety of reasons. The teacher may believe that not participating would cast him or her in a negative light, and thus the teacher would participate in order to avoid any potential negative outcomes of nonparticipation. Conversely, the teacher may choose to participate in the project, and even encourage other colleagues to participate, as well, because the teacher believes that there is not enough good research being conducted in schools. By following this course of action, he or she may actually be taking a bold step to convince other teachers that it is acceptable to participate in research in the classroom. Another alternative is that the teacher may simply comply because he or she does not think that it is worth battling with the administration over a 20-minute-per-day program. At the end of the day, the behavioral result is the same—the teacher will comply with whatever is being requested. In this case, that means that this teacher will participate in the research project.

Delegate. A fifth common strategy for dealing with social problems is to delegate the responsibility for taking action onto someone else. The teacher may be perceived as "passing the buck" to another party and absolve him or herself of responsibility. Or the teacher may delegate a problematic situation to others because the teacher does not have the time or energy to deal with the problem, or the teacher may not believe him or herself capable of solving the problem. The key feature of this approach is that the teacher relinquishes responsibility for the problem and its solution. For example, if a teacher is faced with a situation in which a child is misbehaving in class, he or she may choose to send that student to the principal's office and let the principal decide how to handle the student's disruptive behavior.

Legislate. A sixth strategy is for teachers to create a new policy in an effort to devise a system whereby the teacher will handle all situations of this particular kind in a consistent manner. For many social encounters that teachers will face, there may not be any explicit rules on how to handle the situation. Indeed, much of the knowledge that teachers possess is tacit; it is informal, and not written down anywhere. Consequently, legislation is a step toward making that

tacit knowledge explicit. Thus, when the teacher is faced with the possibility of treating some students differently from others, one strategy is to create a new policy for dealing with the situation. For example, if a student is sleeping in class, the teacher may tell the entire class that there will be a new policy whereby, if students are caught sleeping, they will be given detention.

Retaliate. A seventh strategy for dealing with social problems is to retaliate. Retaliation could take the form of passive–aggressive actions, or it could take the form of more explicit aggression, such as physical or psychological abuse. Rather than attempting to communicate directly with a person, a teacher may choose to retaliate in order to "teach the person a lesson." Retaliation may also have an element of punishment involved. The goal of the teacher may be to shame or belittle the antagonist. A key feature of the retaliation approach is that it places the problem out in the public domain, often relying upon social pressure to motivate change or solve a problem. For example, if a student talks back to the teacher in front of the entire classroom, the teacher using the retaliation approach might choose to ask the student a potentially embarrassing question, or make fun of the student in a public way in front of the other class members. It could be explicit (e.g., a teacher yells at a student who is breaking the rules), or it could be subtle (e.g., two girls are not getting along in class because they are fighting over a boy, so the teacher changes lesson plans in order to discuss friendship), but the targets of retaliation are aware that they are being retaliated against. Individuals choosing to retaliate will generally reject the conference approach, instead believing that, in some circumstances, people are not likely to change on the basis of a discussion, but rather will be more likely to change their behaviors only as the result of a direct attack on their egos. In other words, if one can embarrass the other party, the other party will think twice before she tries to embarrass the retaliator again.

We believe that the majority of behaviors that a person may take within the context of a social interaction can be classified into one of these seven categories. Consequently, the seven strategies may potentially provide a robust framework in which to think about potential approaches to dealing with social interactions that frequently occur within the context of teaching.

Measuring Practical Skills

In this part of the paper, we discuss some background related to the measurement of practical skills in dealing with others. We then present practical examples illustrating how the seven strategies we propose can be used to measure various ways of handlings social situations. Preliminary evidence for the "inter-rater" reliability of this framework will also be presented and discussed.

Background

The field of social problem solving tends to rely upon the methodology of situational-judgment tests to assess social competence. The methodology of using situational-judgment tests to assess social problem-solving skills has been well developed and validated (Sternberg et al., 2000). The idea behind such tests is that the respondent is presented with a short written description that provides information about a particular social problem, and the respondent is then asked how he or she would go about handling the situation (Pettit et al., 1989).

There are two major traditions associated with scoring situational-judgment tests (Mize & Cox, 2001). The first suggests that effective social problem solvers are defined by their capacity to generate a large number of solutions to social problems (Spivak, Platt, & Shure, 1976). The second tradition suggests that the most effective social problem solvers tend to have well-developed scripts for dealing with social encounters (Abelson, 1981; Nelson, 1981). Scripts represent people's internal rules for responding to social situations. Thus, proponents of this approach tend to focus upon the first response given by a respondent, as it represents the most relevant and well-primed script.

Thus, prior research has tended to define social competence on the basis either of the sheer number of potential strategies that could be generated to solve social problems, or the quality of the first response option generated. We are proposing a synthesis between the two traditional approaches to scoring situational-judgment tests. Specifically, we are suggesting that the number of responses that a person can generate is important; however, the number of responses

that tap unique strategies is more important than simply the sheer number of responses. Similarly, there are likely to be better and worse response alternatives (or scripts) to any given situation. However, the best problem solvers would be able to generate scripts that correspond to as many as possible of the seven distinct strategies. For example, a teacher who articulates five solutions for solving a social problem that all tap into some element of the avoidance strategy does not have as valuable a repertoire as a teacher who is able to generate five solutions for solving a social problem that tap into five of the seven unique strategies we have outlined.

To date, there has been no theoretical framework for thinking about potential responses to social problems arising in the context of teaching. The seven strategies we have outlined are intentionally broad in order to capture a wide range of behaviors. Indeed, each strategy may, in fact, hold to several substrategies. Overall, however, the seven strategies are reliably distinguishable for most social situations (see *Preliminary Inter-Rater Reliability Evidence*).

Practical Examples of the Seven Strategies

In our current research related to the practical intelligence of teachers, we have constructed a series of situational-judgment tests for elementary-, middle-, and high-school teachers. In this section, we present some practical examples of how the seven strategies were used to develop potential response alternatives to situational-judgment tests for elementary-, middle-, and high-school teachers. We developed three separate surveys because we found that the types of issues faced by each group of teachers were sufficiently different to warrant separate tacit-knowledge instruments.

Elementary school. Figure 1 presents an example item from a survey we have designed to assess the tacit knowledge of elementary-school teachers. The social encounters presented in the stem of the items were drawn from interviews conducted with elementary-school teachers in which we asked the teachers to give us some examples of situations they had encountered throughout the course of their teaching careers that they were never formally taught how to handle. Figure 1 also lists the potential response options that teachers are given. We tried to retain as

many of the actual responses given by teachers as possible. At times, we also added potential responses in order to provide options corresponding to the seven strategies described earlier. The potential response options are listed and the corresponding category for each is listed in brackets.

Figure 1

Example Elementary-School Scenario: Dealing With Subordinates

Mrs. Smith had just finished teaching her first-grade class, so all of her students were still in the classroom and had not yet left for their break, when she received a note saying, "I love you, Mrs. Smith," from one of her students, Mike. Mike is a very shy boy and this was the first time he had shown his feelings for Mrs. Smith. Usually he would hide his eyes when she talked to him, and his cheeks would turn red.

Given the situation, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1. [AVOID] Mrs. Smith should do nothing right away; walk away and wait for a natural opportunity to thank him for the note.

2. [CONFER] Mrs. Smith should pull Mike aside and thank him privately right after she reads the note.

3. [CONSULT] Mrs. Smith should speak to another teacher who knows Mike and get his/her advice.

4. [COMPLY] By tomorrow morning, Mrs. Smith should write back to Mike saying how much she appreciated his note.

5. [DELEGATE] Mrs. Smith should call Mike's parents and ask them to convey her gratitude to Mike.

6. [LEGISLATE] Mrs. Smith should announce to the class that she likes getting letters from students and, anytime she does, she will be sure to let the class know.

7. [RETALIATE] In the presence of the whole class, Mrs. Smith should ask Mike to stay behind and, after everybody else has left, thank him.

Middle school. Figure 2 presents an example item from a survey we have designed to assess the tacit knowledge of middle-school teachers. The potential response options are listed, and the corresponding category for each is listed in brackets.

Figure 2

Example Middle-School Scenario: Dealing With Peers

Mr. Thompson usually gets along well with his colleagues. In a departmental meeting about the curriculum, one colleague personally attacks him because Mr. Thompson expressed a different opinion about a new program than that of most of his colleagues.

Given the situation, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1. [AVOID] Mr. Thompson should ignore the attack and continue his discussion with another teacher.

2. [CONFER] Mr. Thompson should ask his colleague to explain his point of view instead of attacking him.

3. [CONSULT] After the meeting, Mr. Thompson should ask one of the other teachers how he or she thinks he should deal with his colleague's comments.

4. [COMPLY] Mr. Thompson should change his opinion about the curriculum because it is causing too much turmoil.

5. [DELEGATE] Mr. Thompson should have the principal speak to the colleague about his behavior.

6. [LEGISLATE] Mr. Thompson should ask the principal to establish formal rules of order for faculty meetings.

7. [RETALIATE] Mr. Thompson should turn on the colleague and personally attack him in return.

High school. Figure 3 presents an example item from a survey we have designed to assess the tacit knowledge of high-school teachers. The potential response options are listed, and the corresponding category for each is listed in brackets.

Figure 3

Example High-School Scenario: Dealing With Supervisors

Ms. Martin is teaching at a new middle school this year. Despite her best efforts, the principal has been openly critical of Ms. Martin since her arrival at the school. The principal does not seem to criticize any of the other teachers nearly as much. Ms. Martin consults a colleague about this and he tells her that the reason could be that the principal would have preferred to hire another candidate who was a personal friend. This candidate was less qualified and was not given approval by the school board.

Given the situation, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1. [AVOID] Ms. Martin should start looking for a job at another school.
2. [CONFER] Ms. Martin should confront the principal about the issue, mentioning what her colleague has told her.
3. [CONSULT] Ms. Martin should ask her department chair for advice.
4. [COMPLY] Ms. Martin should ask the principal for suggestions to improve her performance.
5. [DELEGATE] Ms. Martin should try to gain the support of other teachers and ask them to speak to the principal on her behalf.
6. [LEGISLATE] Ms. Martin should decide that, from now on, she will not take the principal's criticisms seriously.
7. [RETALIATE] Ms. Martin should tell the principal that she will write a letter to the school board if he continues to treat her poorly.

Preliminary Inter-Rater Reliability Evidence

Two project-team members worked together to refine the response options and independently rated each of the response options according to the definitions presented in the previous section. The two team members then got together to review the items, discuss areas of disagreement, and refine the response options or the scoring rubric. At the end of that process, the two members came to consensus with regard to which strategy each response option was intended to represent.

The next step was to give the scoring rubric and the items to two independent raters not involved in the project to evaluate the adequacy of the scoring rubric. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Inter-Rater Reliability Estimates (Percentages of Agreement With the Development Team)

Strategy	Elementary	Middle	High	Full
AVOID	R1: 73%	R1: 67%	R1: 75%	R1: 71%
	R2: 100%	R2: 92%	R2: 83%	R2: 91%
CONFRONT	R1: 82%	R1: 33%	R1: 33%	R1: 48%
	R2: 91%	R2: 75%	R2: 83%	R2: 83%
CONSULT	R1: 64%	R1: 75%	R1: 75%	R1: 71%
	R2: 82%	R2: 67%	R2: 92%	R2: 80%
COMPLY	R1: 45%	R1: 75%	R1: 50%	R1: 57%
	R2: 45%	R2: 75%	R2: 58%	R2: 60%
DELEGATE	R1: 64%	R1: 92%	R1: 100%	R1: 85%
	R2: 73%	R2: 75%	R2: 92%	R2: 80%
LEGISLATE	R1: 91%	R1: 58%	R1: 58%	R1: 69%
	R2: 82%	R2: 83%	R2: 67%	R2: 77%
RETALIATE	R1: 40%	R1: 83%	R1: 75%	R1: 67%
	R2: 70%	R2: 75%	R2: 83%	R2: 76%

The results in Table 1 show the percentage agreement between each rater and the categorization listed by the development team. The results indicate that each of the raters exhibited fairly high agreement with the development team. Percentage agreement for Rater 1 ranged from 33% to 100%, with a median percentage agreement of 73%. The percentage agreement for Rater 2 was slightly better, ranging from 45% to 100%, with a median of 82% agreement with the development team.

The ratings were also consistent across the three instruments, with a median percentage agreement of 73% for the elementary-school instrument, and 75% for both the middle- and high-school instruments.

The strategy of compliance caused the most difficulty in terms of generating agreement between the raters and the experts. In particular, the median percentage agreement across all three instruments for the compliance category was 54%, while the median percentage agreement across all three instruments for all other categories ranged from 75% to 84%. Overall, the results provide some preliminary evidence supporting the idea that the seven categories are empirically distinguishable from one another.

Summary

In the first part of this paper, we review the core elements of most teacher-preparation programs. We argue that, in addition to providing subject-matter preparation, pedagogical preparation, and student-teaching experiences, teacher-preparation programs should consider including courses targeted at developing practical skills for dealing with others. Many educational policies and research studies give the impression that teaching is tantamount to instruction (Stigler et al., 1999). Yet, there is far more to teaching than instruction. The majority of day-to-day teaching activities involve some element of social interaction. Indeed, teachers must be prepared to deal with parents, administrators, and peers. In addition, teachers need strategies for dealing with situations that arise outside the context of the classroom. But teachers receive no systematic preparation to help them organize their approaches to social problem solving within the context of a coherent theoretical framework.

Thus, in the second part of this paper, we propose one potential framework for developing practical skills for dealing with others that follows from Sternberg's theory of successful intelligence (1997; 1999). In particular, we show how practical skills are composed of the capacity to deal with self, deal with others, and deal with tasks. In focusing on the component of dealing with others, we articulate seven strategies for thinking about how to handle social interactions in a

school context. These strategies were empirically derived through analyses of interview data gathered from teachers. Specifically, we propose that, for any given social situation, teachers may choose to avoid, confer, consult, comply, delegate, legislate, or retaliate.

In the third part of this paper, we discuss some potential approaches to measuring practical skills in dealing with others within the context of teaching. We briefly review the work on measuring these skills within the areas of social-competence development and conflict resolution. Both fields have relied upon the methodology of situational-judgment tests to measure skills in dealing with others. The major limitation to this approach has traditionally been the lack of an overarching theoretical framework to guide in the development of scenarios and response options. We propose that using Sternberg's theory of successful intelligence provides a useful framework for constructing situational-judgment tests within the context of teaching.

We believe that each of the seven strategies we propose may be more or less effective, depending upon the nature of the situational context in which a teacher finds himself or herself. Thus, one direction for future research is to attempt to develop a taxonomy of situational characteristics related to the kinds of interactions that teachers commonly face. A model for social interaction could then be developed that specifies which strategies will be more or less effective across various kinds of situations.

The seven strategies for dealing with social interactions described in this paper present a new framework that may prove useful for teacher preparation. We believe that how a person chooses to deal with social interactions is not simply a matter of personality differences, but also involves the extent to which the person has a systematic framework for choosing among different response alternatives. Although each social interaction in life is unique, we believe that the seven strategies presented here provide a framework for evaluating potential responses to various situations that will encompass a broad array of the most common courses of action that a teacher could pursue.

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