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BOOK REVIEW

Schleifer, D., **Rinehart, C.**, **& Yanisch, T.** (2017). *Teacher collaboration in perspective. A guide to research*. *San Francisco: Public Agenda*

Reviewed by *Ágnes Hornyák*

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The multi-authored volume seeks to respond to the changing school environment that leads to student success. Beyond the well-established literature of the chapters, the authors strive to highlight specific practices regarding several issues. Does teacher collaboration improve student learning? How do teachers collaborate? What are some ways in which principals can foster teacher collaboration? How do schools make time for teachers to collaborate? Directions for future research: What more do we need to know? These issues are in the focus of the book.

First of all we have to define: collaboration. Teacher collaboration refers to a family of practices, defined and described by researchers in many different ways: existing teacher teams can leverage their time together to establish deeper collaboration. In professional communities, teachers work together with a shared vision for the benefit of all students. In lesson study, teachers collaboratively design lessons and observe one another teaching in order to better understand how students learn and to improve instruction. Professional development is not typically designed to create long-term collaboration but can lead teachers to support one another. Collaborative practices tend to be more successful when teachers have shared goals to achieve. The volume is about the typology of collaborative activities and structures (Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015): A 'group' is defined merely as a collection of individuals who share a common goal or identity. A 'team' is a group with shared goals for which they hold themselves mutually accountable and team members are interdependent in tasks and outcomes. A 'community of practice' a term coined by Jean Lave and Etienne Wegner in 1991, refers to groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. A 'professional community' or 'professional learning community' is a collaborative culture characterized by shared values and a vision that is overarching across all teams or other forms of teacher groupings in a school or network across schools. The elements of efficient professional development: a focus on content, opportunities for active learning, coherence, between the goals of the professional development and school and district policies, sufficient duration, in length of time and numbers of hours spent on the activity, collective participation. The process-level criteria for effective collaboration included

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(Vangrieken et al., 2015): regular, open and honest conversation among team members, actively keeping track of innovations or developments in the education world, clear definition of roles and shared responsibility, adaptability to changes in pedagogy or curriculum, an adequate amount of effort put toward collaboration by team members, adequate competencies: knowledge, skills and strategies to approach the work, the responsibility to use all members' expertise, use of data to set goals and the use and understanding of student data, structural, informational and instructional support from the school principal. Outcome-level criteria for effective collaboration included (Vangrieken et al., 2015): the attainment of goals set by the team, the increase of knowledge and its applications to improve group members' practice, the translation of knowledge into actual changes in the classroom, the capability of the team to work together in the future.

The main issue of chapter six: How the schools make time for teachers to collaborate? We can read about some schools and districts explicitly build time into teachers' schedules to enable them to collaborate. Making time for collaboration can include scheduling occasional days off for students or creating regular times during the school week when teachers can work together. Time and spaces are required for sustained, ongoing discussions of lesson designs, student learning processes, subject-area issues, multidisciplinary connections and pedagogical challenges. Principals are particularly influential in making time for teachers to collaborate, as they make many decisions about schedules in their schools.

An exciting part of this book is when researchers have described a variety of approaches to making time for teachers to collaborate. Some schools use professional development or in-service days for collaboration while others carefully construct teachers' and students' schedules so that teachers on a team all have shared the time when they are not teaching a class so that they can work together. One district in California changed schedules so that school started later once every 2 weeks, giving teachers 90 min of collaboration plus 30 min before the students arrived at school to prepare for classes. A district in Texas had teachers meet in grade-level teams on Wednesday afternoons every two weeks, although it is unclear from the study whether these meetings took place after the regular school day.

I recommend this book to teachers who are willing or willing in the future to collaborate to improve student performance and to those directors who can do a lot to ensure that the collaboration is effective and efficient.

REFERENCE

Vangrieken, K., Dochy, F., Raes, E., & Kyndt, E. (2015). Teacher collaboration: A systematic review. In *Educational Research*, *15*, 35.