

University of Pécs
„Oktatás és Társadalom”
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**On a Paradigmatic Model of Cooperative
Learning**

Theses

Consultants

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Thesis context

We can easily find a lot of different descriptions of cooperative learning and in the same way we can find different terminologies about cooperative learning (collaborative learning, learning together, Kagan cooperative learning, complex instruction model, Co-op model). In my Thesis I draught a picture about a possible general model of cooperative learning that one could outline by analyzing the discourse of decisive resources and models of cooperative learning. I focused on those models from the USA which have basic effects on the discourse that identifies itself as cooperative learning. Aiming at identifying the discourse and a common general model that could include all of the basic elements from all of the basic models I have appealed for Kuhn's theory of paradigm (Kuhn 1970).

I have examined the paradigmatic features of the general model of cooperative learning which I had set up in second chapter. Cooperative learning (Aronson

1971, 1978, Johnson 1984, 1999, Kagan 1992, Arató – Varga 2006) has a revolutionary impact on practice and cognition of institutional and public education from the viewpoint of inclusion and equal access to public knowledge and to the resources that could be achieved by schooling (Salvin 1984, Johnson 1994, Jonson an others 2000, Benda 2002, Kézdi – Surányi 2008, Aronson 1999, 2006). This impact is like a scientific shift of a paradigm described by Thomas S. Kuhn (Kuhn 1963, 1967) and debated by many other scientists. I gave a draft of how the “basic principle” based model (Kagan 1992, Arató – Varga 2006) of cooperative learning can fulfill the criteria of a scientific paradigm following and re-reading Kuhn’s theory. That is accuracy, consistency, broad scooping, simplicity, fruitfulness from which viewpoints the importance of fulfilling the criteria is relevant referring to the issue of the possibility of a general cooperative learning model. The main issue of the investigation of this general model is how to extend the cooperative model to systematical level.

I argue that my general cooperative model that is based on the basic principles of cooperative learning could be applied in institutional, inter-institutional, school district and system level as well not only in-class situations. Even more the cooperative paradigm realizes a real shift in approaches and solutions in any kind of group activity beyond learning from the viewpoint of inclusive cooperation.

Furthermore I argue that the social-psychological approaches of cooperative learning (Slavin 1984, Aronson 1971, 1978, Johnson 1999, Arató – Varga 2005, 2006) can be seen as a scientific shift in the science of education. This general model of cooperative learning has a structural approach which is a de-constructive one. By the means of cooperative structures (in the strict meaning of the principle-based model) we can de-construct hierarchical, racist and anti-democratic structures with-in classrooms, schools, districts and public education systems. Basic principles of cooperative learning are the key elements of the cooperative paradigm which describe the cooperative structures by very simply principles that are both

descriptive and prescriptive ones. These cooperative basic principles are generative principles as well: anyone could set up living cooperative structures, following them, independently from the targeted age, culture, languages and topic. These structures are more inclusive ones than the other learning structures usually can be found in everyday practice in our schools (Aronson 1971, 1978, Slavin 1977, 1980, Johnson 2000, Wenglinsky 2000, 2002, Benda 2002, Kézdi – Surányi 2008., Arató – Varga 2005, 2008).

Thesis Statements

- *We could provide a description of a general model of cooperative learning that is based on the basic principles derived from the structural approach.*

Forty years of cooperative discourse provides different but evidence based models of cooperative learning (E. Aronson, D. Johnson and R. Johnson, S. Kagan, R. Slavin, E. G. Cohen). These models have their own basic elements or components described and have been studied for decades. The structural approach that was firstly mentioned by Kagan can provide a guideline following which we could set up a general model of cooperative learning. This approach based on the basic principles of cooperative learning (described by Kagan and Arató-Varga).

- *Cooperative basic principles not just describe structural features but create their definition as general rules for construction.*

By the means of different basic principles of cooperative learning we can analyze any kind of learning structures. This principle-based analysis is the so called PIES analysis which was completed in this Thesis. Following PIES any could develop his/her practice to achieve more cooperative, effective, efficient and fair learning-teaching practice.

- *The given general model of cooperative learning bears paradigmatic characteristics.* Cooperative learning discourse has described a paradigmatic exemplar (Aronson's Jigsaw Classroom), symbolic generalizations (basic principles of cooperative learning), common beliefs (changing behaviors first to achieve changing attitudes etc.), values (proven cooperative structures, aspects of analysis of learning structures, PIES analysis).
- *The general model that is based on the basic principles of cooperative learning could be implemented on public education system development level as well.*

The main effort of my Thesis is to prove that we can follow an interpretation which refers to the

public education system level, beyond the interpretation of cooperative learning, within classroom or school context. We (with Aranka Varga) had the opportunity to set up such kind of system-development model that was based on the basic principles of cooperative learning and to conduct surveys on this subject. I proved that the opportunity to create cooperative models for public education system development was no longer an idea but a living chance to go further in changing or educational systems to be more democratic and evidently effective ones...

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