TE 943 Professional Development Seminar

Wednesdays, 12:40-3:30 PM, Room 133D Erickson Hall
Spring 2008

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Course Overview and Objectives:

In this seminar, we will explore existing research and theoretical literature on teacher professional development. This will entail exploring models of professional development in disciplines such as science, mathematics, social studies, and English. Course themes will include: (a) understanding critical issues such as the impact of standards and teacher accountability, organizational contexts, and teachers knowledge and beliefs when designing professional development for teachers; (b) exploring frameworks for designing professional development; (c) exploring teachers’ professional learning communities; (d) examining links between professional development and teacher and student learning; and (e) investigating the effectiveness of large-scale professional development initiatives on teachers’ knowledge, skills, curriculum enactment, and classroom practice.

Teachers are constantly faced with increased calls for accountability from standards and high stakes testing movements. Groups such as the National Research Council, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Council for the Social Studies, National Council of Teachers of English, and state education departments underscore new measures of performance for students in grades kindergarten through twelve. At the same time, higher standards are emphasized for teachers. Teacher professional development is regarded by many as a foundation for the implementation of such standards-based reform, and for ensuring that students can learn to new high standards. This course focuses on issues such as to what extent does professional development research link to teacher knowledge, practice, and student achievement.

Course Requirements and Grading

Readings and Discussions (35% final grade)
You are expected to read and be able to thoughtfully discuss the papers throughout the semester. This includes being prepared to participate in class discussions with our guest speakers. You will also be in charge of leading a discussion related to the readings for one or two classes during the semester. This entails preparing a set of questions and discussion activities as well as distributing a one-page critical summary for each paper (see details at the end of the syllabus). You will be able to sign up for the week(s) you choose to present. I will be happy to provide feedback on your ideas for the class discussion and activities beforehand.
Required readings: Various papers are posted on our course ANGEL site. Other readings related to guest speakers’ presentations might be assigned throughout the semester.

Final Course Project (50% final grade)
The final course project is an opportunity for you to advance your own research and/or teaching. Options for the final project may include a literature review, a small research project (or a pilot study), or artifacts to be used in a learning environment. Other options are possible, but they must be discussed with the instructor beforehand.

Phases for completing your final project:

- An abstract (or preliminary description) of your written project is due in class on January 30. The purpose of this preliminary description is for you to share with me your initial ideas about the project. This will enable me to provide you with possible resources to use, directions to take, and/or issues to consider. Also, plan to share your initial project ideas with your peers in class.

- A two to three-page outline or plan that articulates the essential components of your final project is due on February 27. You will work in pairs to provide and receive feedback.

- Bring a draft write-up of your project to class on April 2. You will work in pairs to provide and receive feedback.

- Final project is due on April 30.

Your written project should be approximately 10-15 double-spaced pages in length. You must write your paper in APA style. APA style, described in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, is the format used in the large majority of educational publications, including most of the readings for this course. Additional guidelines for the paper (including outline or plan) are discussed in detail on page 12.

I am very interested in working with you in having a final project that is both meaningful (practical and advances your thinking and research in your area of interest), and well-grounded in the research literature on teacher professional development. I look forward to having all course participants share their final projects with one-another at the end of the semester.

Participation and Attendance (15%)
The success of any seminar course hinges on active participation by each member. Each member is expected to come to class ready to contribute thoughts and prepare for class each week through readings and course projects. In this way, each person will not only benefit from his/her own efforts and experiences, but also from those of the whole community. Because it’s not possible to participate if you do not attend, your final grade will be affected by anything beyond one excused absence. Please let me know in advance if you anticipate missing a class.

Other Considerations
Accommodations for Disabilities. It is Michigan State’s policy not to discriminate against qualified students with documented disabilities in its educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for modifications in this course, contact your instructor and the Resource
Center for Persons with Disabilities. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY). Instructors in the course may request a VISA Form (Verified Individual Student Accommodations Form) from a student requesting services. The OPHS website is at http://www.rcpd.msu.edu/Home/.

Course Schedule: Course Readings & Assignments

January 9: First class

- Introduction and course overview; and sign up for readings.

January 16: Mapping the Terrain of Teacher Professional Development and Learning: Contemporary Research Perspectives

Readings


Guest Speaker: Joan Ferrini-Mundy, Division Director at the National Science Foundation and University Distinguished Professor in Mathematics Education at Michigan State University.

January 23: Mapping the Terrain of Teacher Professional Development and Learning: Contemporary Research Perspectives (continued)

Readings


January 30: Frameworks for Designing Professional Development for Teachers

Readings

Check-in #1 about final project:
- An abstract (or written description) of your written project is due; Plan to share your initial ideas about the project with your peers in working groups.

February 6: Continue Exploring Frameworks for Designing Professional Development for Teachers; Teachers’ Communities of Practice

Readings

Guest Speaker: Judith Warren Little, Professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley.

February 13: Teachers’ Communities of Practice (continued)

Readings


**February 20: Teachers’ Communities of Practice (continued)**

**Readings**

• Lewis, C. (2002). Does lesson study have a future in the United States? *Journal of the Nagoya University Education Department, 1,* 1-24.


**Optional readings:**


**February 27: Linking Professional Development to Teacher Learning --i.e., Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes, and Classroom Practice--and Student Learning**

**Readings**


Check-in #2 about final project:
• Bring a 2 to 3-page outline or plan that articulates the essential components of your final course project; you will work in pairs to provide and receive feedback.

**Guest Speaker:** Barry Fishman, Professor of Educational Studies and Learning Technologies at the University of Michigan.

**March 5:** No class due to Spring Break.

**March 12:** Field Trip to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

**Reading**

**Guest Speaker:** Deborah L. Ball, Dean and William H. Payne Collegiate Professor in Education at the University of Michigan.

**March 19:** Linking Professional Development to Teacher Learning--i.e., Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes, and Classroom Practice--and Student Learning

**Readings**

**Guest Speaker:** Randi Stanulis, Professor of Teacher Education at Michigan State University.

**March 26:** AERA. No class.

**April 2:** Focusing on Students’ Thinking as a Basis for Teacher Learning: A Professional Development Model

**Readings**


Check-in #3 about final course project:

- Bring a draft write-up of your project; you will work in pairs to provide and receive feedback.

**Guest Speaker:** Hilda Borko, Professor in Education at Stanford University.

**April 9: Characterizing Professional Development in Relations to Teacher Knowledge and Student Learning**

**Readings**


**Guest Speaker:** Jodie Galosy, Ph.D., Project Director for DR-K12 Grant of Teacher Professional Development.

**April 16: Use of Case Discussions: A Strategy for Professional Learning**

**Reading**


**Guest Speaker:** Rand Spiro, Professor of Educational Psychology at Michigan State University.

**April 23: Scaling Up Professional Development Efforts**

**Readings**


**Guest Speaker:** Michele Spitulnik, Research Scientist in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley.

**April 30: Last day of class**

Final course projects are due. Class sharing of final projects through a poster or some other visual representation.
Reading and Critical Summaries

First, a few important notes:

- Please write the citation of your paper at the top of the critical summary and write your name in the header so people know who wrote the summary.
- Do not feel compelled to write full text in your summary. Bulleted points are often easier to read and use when referring back to the summary.
- Keep your summaries concise! They should be no more than 1-1.5 pages. (Remember, they are summaries.) You can always refer back to the page numbers in the text if you need more detail.

Developing understanding of a reading involves answering the following questions:

- What is the author trying to say?
- How does what the author is trying to say relate to writings of other authors? How is the author positioned in the field?
- How would the author explain or interpret events related to science learning and teaching?
- How does the author’s understanding compare with yours?

Critical summaries will help begin our dialogue about the first two questions. A critical summary explains the main idea(s) of an article and expresses a particular point of view. A summary should clearly note that the information being conveyed is not your own. To be clear about who originally wrote the material, always begin your summary with the author's name and the title of the piece (i.e., book, article, web page, etc.).

A critical summary does not address any of the following questions:

- Do you like the article?
- Do you agree with the author?
- Is the premise realistic?
- Do the assertions reflect your personal experience?
- Is this kind of research useful for your doctoral dissertation?

A critical summary may address any of the following questions:

- Is the research method appropriate to the claims?
- What significant factors have been ignored in the analysis?
- What perspective does the article fail to account for?
- What counts as evidence? What doesn’t count?
- What rhetorical strategies make the argument compelling, provocative, and/or weak?
- How does the article advance our understanding of what constitutes research?
- What are the epistemological and/or political implications of this research approach?
OPTIONS FOR COURSE PROJECTS

Option 1: Literature Review
Write a comprehensive literature review analyzing a trend or issue related to the professional development of teachers in the context of a specific content area—e.g., science, mathematics, social studies, literacy, English, technology, or special education. Again, this review must relate to the frameworks we have read about and discussed in the course.

Components of a literature review paper:
1) Choose a particular issue related to teacher professional development.
2) Use course readings (including the references available through the readings), readings outside the course, and resources such as ERIC to explore the topic. Gather approximately 10 to 15 papers that discuss your focal topic.
3) Read, review and take notes on the readings. Be able to pick out some common themes, including areas of commonalities when applicable. It is essential to identify gaps that exist in the literature. This entails clearly explaining how others have or have not addressed your issue.
4) Determine the key ideas in the literature, as well as your own perspective for the topic. It is essential to include the evidence or theories that support your view.
5) As you draft and revise your outline or plan, think about how you can develop a coherent argument. Refrain from summarizing each paper.
6) In sum, your paper should make it clear to the reader which conversation in the literature you intend to join. As you draw from current literature, explain how others have addressed your issue, and state explicitly how your piece of work makes a contribution (e.g., compares viewpoints, emphasizes someone else’s findings, etc.).

Option 2: A Small Research Project
Conduct a small piece of research (pilot study) on some professional development-related experience (e.g. study groups, action research, and case discussions that involve examining narratives or videotapes of classroom teaching and learning), and analyze the results. Discuss those outcomes within an integrated theoretical framework from class readings and discussions. You must also draw on other readings outside of the course, including utilizing resources such as ERIC.

Feel free to use existing data for this project. For example, if you are involved in an on-going research project, it might be possible to draw on that project to formulate a question and leverage from existing data to answer the question--or collect additional data that is related to the project’s focus. Another option is to collect original data through replicating or extending research findings in the readings.

Option 3: Artifact(s) to Enhance Teachers’ Professional Learning
For this assignment, you may create an artifact(s)--a fully developed design or a work in progress--to enhance new and/or experienced teachers’ professional learning. Feel free to choose from any of the following suggestions described below or propose your own idea:
- Develop a syllabus for a Master’s course for practitioners that you intend to teach
- Create a narrative or video case you intend to use with in-service teachers
- Develop activities or curriculum materials you plan to use in a professional development session(s)

For option 3, your focus should be on describing the theoretical foundations of your design. Draw on the frameworks we have read about and discussed in class.

**Option 4: Other options not listed above must be discussed with the instructor**
GUIDELINES FOR FINAL PROJECT

Expectations for the 2-3 Page Outline due on February 27:
Provide an approximately 2 to 3-page outline or plan that articulates the major components of your final written project. Include:

- a tentative title
- an initial abstract
- a note about which type of paper you are writing
- the outline itself
- a beginning references list

Be sure to describe the foundational research that serves as background for your ideas, including literature from TE 943. Also address the following questions:

- What ideas will you present in the introduction to frame your study?
- What ideas and/or papers will you explore within the paper body?
- What summary, implications, or conclusions will wrap up your review, research or design?
- What remaining resources, questions, or concerns do you have at this point?

Expectations for Final Project due on April 30:
Papers will be judged on: (a) quality and quantity of ideas presented, overall; (b) quality and quantity of literature discussed; (c) quality of original contributions; and (d) clarity of presentation and organization and coherence of ideas. All final papers must use APA styles and correct English grammar. Make sure it is clear which type of paper you are writing (e.g., literature review, small research project, or artifact(s) to be used in a learning environment). You must cite multiple papers read for class, including some literature not read for class. As previously mentioned, the final paper should be approximately 10-15 pages in length, using 1-1/2 spacing.

Make sure your paper contains:

- A title
- A 200 word or less abstract
- An introduction outlining the major ideas and major justification for these ideas
- Paper body with appropriate citations in APA format
- A conclusion including a discussion of educational implications of this work
- A reference list in APA format – full citations for all literature and documents discussed including web pages, journal articles, and curricula