



Education: Focusing the introduction to teacher education around three crucial questions

A course entitled "Exploring Teaching" by Dr. Sharon Feiman-Nemser and Dr. Susan L. Melnick, Michigan State University (1992)

Course Design:

Exploring Teaching (TE-101) is an introductory course for prospective teachers. Typically, introductory teaching courses are organized either around general topics covered in a textbook or around an early field experience. Professors Feiman-Nemser and Melnick suggest that survey courses cover too many topics of little relevance to beginning education students and fail to cover important topics in sufficient depth. Likewise, they argue that early field experience reinforces inexperienced students' beliefs instead of challenging them. In contrast, TE-101 is designed to probe students' unexamined beliefs about teaching and learning. The course is based on three questions: What does it mean to teach? What are schools for? What do teachers need to know? The three questions frame class discussions, personal reflections, analysis of case studies, and videotapes of classroom instruction. The instructors seek to broaden students' understanding of what it means to teach and what they will need to learn in order to be effective teachers.

Towards this end, the course begins by prompting students to examine their own beliefs and desires to teach. Once students are able to articulate their own assumptions, a combination of text analysis and participant observation fuels class discussions that result in critical self-analysis. New perspectives on what helps and hinders teaching and learning are then raised in broader discussions of the confounding forces at work in modern educational systems. Future teachers leave the course with a more profound understanding of their field and with the realization that teaching and learning to teach are highly challenging intellectual tasks.

Higher Level Learning:

The course does not focus on teaching methods; instead, it leads students to examine their own views and those of others as they relate to teaching and learning (**Self, Learning**) Concepts introduced by the course serve to further explore core ideas

rather than acquire subject specific knowledge (**Thinking**). Students come to understand the intellectual investment they need to make in their field, and they come to recognize the degree to which their profession requires a constant commitment to their own learning (**Caring**).

Active Learning:

Field experience in this introductory course is replaced by peer-teaching and analysis of lesson transcripts (**Doing**), as well as viewing videotapes (**Observing**.) Text analysis is complemented by both students' self-analysis (**Dialogue with Self**) and by class discussions (**Dialogue with Others**).

Feiman-Nemser, S., & Featherstone, H. L. (Eds.). (1992). Exploring Teaching: Reinventing an Introductory Course. New York: Teachers College Press.