

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

EDUC 488-4 (D1.00)
SPECIAL TOPICS: TEACHER RESEARCH -- TEACHING "AGAINST THE GRAIN"
(Cat. #55671)

Summer Session, 1994
(July 4 - 29)
Monday, Wednesday & Friday
8:30-12:20, MPX 8651/2

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PREREQUISITE: EDUC 401/402

COURSE OUTLINE

Traditionally it has been assumed that knowledge about teaching is generated by researchers outside of schools and then applied by teachers inside them. What is missing from the knowledge base, then, are the voices of teachers themselves, the questions they ask, the ways they use writing and talk in their own lives, and the interpretive frameworks they use to understand and improve their classroom practices. Teacher research is an alternative method for generating knowledge about teaching and learning. It links research with practice and inquiry with reform across the professional lifespan.

Over the past decade, there has been renewed interest among teachers in exploring the potential of teacher research as a mode of professional development, an avenue for generating practice-based knowledge about teaching, and a catalyst for social change in schools, universities and communities. This course presents a conceptual framework for reading, understanding, and conducting teacher research by exploring questions regarding: the definition and types of teacher research, the status of teacher research as a form of research on teaching, the nature and function of knowledge that is created when teachers do research, and the implications of teacher research for the construction of a knowledge base for teacher education and professional development, and for the politics of school and university relationships. The course will draw on the published and unpublished work of teachers across the country who have conducted research in their own K-12 classrooms, as well as the work of university-based teachers and researchers who have worked collaboratively with teachers. The course provides practical help in functioning as a teacher researcher and exploring its potential for improving teaching and learning in the classroom. Students will read teacher research essays, journals, accounts of oral inquiries, and classroom studies. They will develop methods for conducting research that addresses issues and problems in their own classrooms and have opportunities to work closely with others who are interested in functioning as teacher researchers.

TOPICS (see enlarged course outline for specific details)

1. Concepts of Teacher Research
2. Understanding Teaching from the Inside: Teachers on Teaching, Learning, and Schooling
3. Contexts of Teacher Research: Inquiry, Knowledge, and Practice
4. Teacher Research as Method: Paradigms, Methodological Issues, and Blurred Genres.

ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be expected to prepare readings prior to class sessions and participate actively in all class discussions at both the small group and whole class levels. In addition, students will write brief critical essays, which are designed to promote thoughtful responses to course readings in which they pose their own questions about the topics they find central. The intent in these essays is to use other people's research to uncover their own interpretive frameworks and to explore the implications of these connections in ways that are tentative and evolutionary. Finally, students will engage in a series of individual and group activities toward a teacher research course project. This will include an exploration of a question of practice, a teaching dilemma, or study of an individual child; a plan for learning about this question by taking the classroom or classroom group as a site for inquiry and collecting observational, interview, and documentary data; and a discussion of possible frameworks for analysis related to course readings and discussions.

READINGS

The course will draw on selected readings from texts as well as on a wide range of current articles and the published and unpublished research of experienced teachers and student teachers in a variety of contexts.