

Spring Semester 1998

EDUC 487 - 4
Special Topic - Critical Incidents in
Teaching: The Teacher as Decision Maker
E01.00

Dr. S. Wassermann
Office: MPX 8638
Tel: 291-4483
selma_wassermann@sfu.ca

PREREQUISITE

Educ 401/402

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is offered for preservice and inservice teachers who wish to participate in the examination of the decision making processes of teachers, and understand the kinds of influences that bear upon these processes.

One of the important aspects of professional functioning is the autonomy of professionals to arrive at decisions based upon their sound professional judgment. The ability to examine and interpret data, to analyze assumptions, and to project potential consequences is considered a true mark of professional functioning.

In some professions, a variety of pressures -- political, social, emotional, personal, temporal -- serve to influence professional judgment and consequently, decision making. Such influence may have a deep and pervasive effect upon the degrees of freedom and emotional health of professionals, upon their beliefs and values about the profession itself, and upon their subsequent practice. This course uses contemporary film and readings to raise levels of awareness about factors influencing teachers' decision making, through examination of certain critical incidents in teaching. Films, books, journal articles and written case studies are supplemented by focused group discussions through which the many facets of educational decision making may be more critically examined. It is through this process that students become more critically aware of personal decision making in their own professional/educational contexts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To promote greater understanding of and appreciation for the various and complex factors that influence personal decision making in professional contexts.
2. To promote awareness of the relationship between decision making and personal empowerment.
3. To promote more critical awareness of personal decision making in professional contexts.
4. To develop more effective strategies to aid in personal decision making.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Evaluation is based on the satisfactory completion of the following requirements:

- a. Regular attendance and active, informed participation in seminars and study groups.
- b. Completion of assigned readings
- c. Individual written analysis of a case
- d. Journal of reflections on professional decision making
- e. A written case
- f. A self-evaluation profile

REQUIRED READINGS

Wassermann, Selma (1993). Getting Down to Cases. New York: Teachers College Press. ISBN 0-8077-3291-5 (paperback)
All articles in Custom Courseware package
Two additional readings from the supplementary reading list