

University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education

EDUCATION 5500 (On Line)

Understanding Professional Practice and Professional Development Fall 2014

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Course Description

An introduction to a broad variety of methods in which knowledge and understanding of professional practice and professional development can be enhanced and applied through field studies for professionals in education and education-related contexts in community settings.

Course Texts

Timperley, H. (2011). *Realizing the power of professional learning*. Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.

Townsend, D., & Adams, P. (2009). *The essential equation: A handbook for school improvement*. Calgary, AB: Detselig.

Course Goals

The goals of this course focus on the nature of professional work and the optimization of professional practice in educational settings. Students will be encouraged to locate their perceived school-based leadership roles within the context of broader professional values and expectations. As one critical strategy for school improvement, the enhancement of professional practice will be examined from a variety of analytical perspectives. These perspectives will also take account of the unit for improvement in schooling. For example, education professionals can focus their efforts on service to individual students, or classrooms, or schools, or school districts, or provinces, or even nations. For the purposes of this course, however, students will be encouraged to ground their thinking in the perceptions of their own development and the experiences of their own workplace. To that end, the course will provide opportunities for interacting with various school improvement perspectives and professional development approaches. In so doing, the central focus will be on the potential for enhancing the reciprocal relationship between formal school leaders (e.g., school principals) and classroom teachers.

Course Objectives

Reflecting on One's Own Professional Practice as a School Leader

- Developing an initial reflective statement that captures the essence of one's professional values, vision, and orientation to the service of students, colleagues and community
- Synchronizing individual professional values with Alberta requirements for employed teaching professionals
- Reviewing and evaluating reflective strategies for education professionals
- Exploring how formal school leaders can optimize the professional growth of classroom teachers

Reflecting on the Relational Dynamics of Professional Work

- Building understanding of how formal leaders co-construct professional knowledge with classroom teachers in order to improve learning in educational workplaces

Understanding the Links between Professional Learning and Knowledge Production

- Understanding how links can be forged between professional staff learning activities and the production of knowledge in school communities

The Linkages between School Improvement, Formal Leadership Roles and Teaching

- Developing an understanding of key school improvement concepts
- Applying an understanding of school improvement to specific educational units (for example, the classroom, the school, the school district)
- Developing an understanding of specific leadership activities that have been shown to optimize teaching and learning

Broader Philosophical Objectives

- Developing leadership understanding and capacity to facilitate, encourage and institutionalize an ethos of life-long learning in school communities
- Understanding and developing commitment to the ethical dimensions of professional practice, including the development and refinement of professional core values
- Developing understanding of the organic nature of school communities as self-renewing structures in which generative relationships warrant a strong focus from educational leaders
- Testing assumptions about the balance between uniformity and diversity in professional practice
- Exploring ways to unlock the “cognitive unconscious” (Lakoff, 2008) as a means of optimizing professional learning

Tentative Schedule:

TABLE 1: COURSE CONTENT AND READING REFERENCES

Module	Content Summary	Assigned Readings
1	Reflecting on professional beliefs and expectations	Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy. Ministerial Order (#016/97) Teaching Quality Standard. (AB Education Website) School District Policy Internship reports from past cohorts
2	The Learning Community	<i>The Essential Equation</i> - Chapter 1 and Chapter 2
3	From Professional Development to Professional Learning	<i>Realizing the Power of Professional Learning</i> – Chapter 1
4	Collaborative Inquiry	<i>The Essential Equation</i> – Chapter 3
5	Knowledge of Students Teacher Knowledge	<i>Realizing the Power of Professional Learning</i> – Chapter 2 and Chapter 3
6	Leadership	<i>The Essential Equation</i> – Chapter 4
7	Creating New Opportunities for Students	<i>Realizing the Power of Professional Learning</i> – Chapter 4
8	The Process of Development	<i>The Essential Equation</i> – Chapter 5
9	Leaders of Learning	<i>Realizing the Power of Professional Learning</i> – Chapter 5
10	School Improvement Cycle	<i>The Essential Equation</i> – Chapter 6, and Chapter 7
11	School Improvement Cycle	<i>Realizing the Power of Professional Learning</i> – Chapter 6, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8

TABLE 2: TENTATIVE NUMBERED SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

#	Submission re	Required Group Members	Marks	Due Date	Required Sub-Group Responses
1	Personal Reflection Internship Review	All	5 5	September 8 September 15	
2	Module 2	A	10	September 22	Open
3	Module 3	B	10	September 22	Open
4	Module 4	A	10	September 29	B2
5	Module 5	B	10	September 29	B1
6	Module 6	A	10	October 13	A2
7	Module 7	B	10	October 13	A1

#	Submission re	Required Group Members	Marks	Due Date	Required Sub-Group Responses
8	Module 8	A	10	Nov 3	B2
9	Module 9	B	10	Nov 3	B1
10	Module 10	A	10	Nov 24	A2
11	Module 11	B	10	Nov 24	A1
12	Discussion Board Responses	As indicated	5		
13	Major Paper	All	35	Dec 8	

Specific Requirements for Assignments

Module 1: Personal Reflection (One submission: 5 marks)
“Write a personal reflective statement about your beliefs re professional development.”

For example, you might wish to address who should set direction for it? Who should fund it? With what values and directions should it be aligned? How and when should it be scheduled?
 (300 words)

Module 1: Internship Reflection (One submission: 5 marks)
“Review your assigned Internship Submissions and complete an Internship Summary for each.”

Complete an “Internship Reflection” on your assigned Intern Reflections.
 (Word limit will vary)

Modules 2-11: Submissions in Response to Assigned Readings (Five submissions: 50 marks)
“Each person will submit responses to five modules of assigned reading.”

Members of group A will respond to Modules 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10. Members of group B will respond to Modules 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11. Each submission is worth ten marks. Due dates are listed in Table 2 (above).
 (600-800 words) **N.B.**

Each member of the class is expected to read all of the assigned readings in order to derive maximum benefit from this course. Furthermore, knowledge and application of all the readings will be invaluable for supporting the concepts advanced in your Major Paper.

Module submissions will include your response to one of the assigned Forum Starters (Starters may be a question from the text, a reflection prompt posed by one of the authors, or a question I pose based on the reading) along with their relevance for professional practice in your “real” world. The best submissions will clearly state the main point(s) of the assigned reading(s) (build a brief summary into the question/reflection you are dealing with – the other members of the cohort should be able to gain meaning about the reading from what you have written), along with the assumptions that underpin them. What is the significance of the author(s)’ arguments for improving student

learning? Does the argument make sense for your workplace? How so? If the argument is weak, in what respects would you fault it? Is the argument radical and innovative, tired and well-worn, or simply a poor fit for the real world of schooling? Be sure to close each of your five submissions with a clearly focused and concise conclusion about your reading(s).

Take careful guidance from the rubric (TABLE 3). Provide specific support from the assigned readings whenever you make a major point either for or against the argument being advanced. Edit your writing more than once.

Ensure you follow APA 6th Edition format.

Discussion Board Responses

(5 marks)

“Add meaning to the discussion board when you are assigned to respond to your colleagues.”

For the purposes of Discussion Board Responses, the two main groups (A and B) will be divided into sub-groups (A1; A2; B1; B2). Members of each sub-group will formally participate designated discussions for grading purposes. Other class members may join the discussion if they wish, but they will not be graded for their participation. For example, Table 2 indicates that Group A’s submissions for Module 4 will be posted, and members of Sub-Group B2 will read the module submissions and critique them in a posting on the discussion board. Likewise Group B’s submissions for Module 5 will be posted, and members of Sub-Group B1 will read the module submissions and critique them in a posting on the discussion board.

N.B.

The discussion board is an interactive peer forum designed to encourage thoughtful and respectful dialogue within the cohort of class members. You are encouraged to be critical but respectful. Try to affirm the insights of your colleagues where you feel they can be supported. Add your own insights where appropriate. Be sure to engage your colleagues in light of a careful analysis of the Module reading(s). One good question to consider would be whether the assigned reading(s) and/or submissions have any practical utility for your workplace.

Major Paper

(One submission: 35 marks)

“Create a professional development plan for your school or workplace.”

The main purpose of this paper is to help you apply the major concepts of this course to the real-life context of your workplace. Therefore, each paper must seek to demonstrate proficiency in linking theory to practice. You might wish to give consideration to the following questions in planning the format for your paper:

- What is the unit for improvement in your plan? (Department? School? District?)
- How does your plan forge links to the literature, as exemplified in the assigned readings?
- How does your plan reflect the policy expectations of Alberta Education, your school district, and your school?
- Is your plan consistent with the Alberta Teaching Quality Standard, as set out in Ministerial Order (#016/97)? (You can easily google this on Alberta Education’s web site.)

- What information should I provide to portray the educational context for my plan? (At a minimum, you should consider describing your hypothetical workplace using staff and student demographics, parental characteristics, and formal leadership orientations of the hypothetical principal or supervisor.)
- Be sure to describe relevant features of your hypothetical school district policies and plans.

One way of grounding your thinking might be to think of your plan as a document you must share with your workplace colleagues during the first week of school next year. It must be thoughtful, realistic, affordable, and implementable. Moreover, it must demonstrate strong implications for school improvement and the optimization of student learning. If the plan is well received you could be promoted. If it is cluttered and poorly written you will forever lose the confidence of your colleagues and school community.

N.B.

Do not be afraid to include information from sources beyond those listed in this course. Acknowledge the authors of your underpinning rationale in the conventional APA citation format – including a list of references at the end of your paper. ***Be sure that you do not violate the provisions of Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation in any part of your paper. One way to do this would be to give your workplace and key characters fictional names and/or characteristics that conceal their real identities.***

TABLE 3: RUBRIC FOR MODULE SUBMISSIONS

Marks	EXPECTATIONS
4 (9-10 marks)	The submission gives a clear and concise summary of the key points in the assigned reading(s). Specific examples from real workplaces are used to describe the relevance or irrelevance of the key points for professional practice. Implementation strategies are suggested for key ideas in readings OR alternative perspectives are clearly set out. Writing is focused and consistent with APA standards.
3 (7-8 marks)	The submission gives a clear and concise summary of most of the key points in the reading(s). Examples from real-life settings partially illustrate the extent to which principles or constructs from the article are applied in practice. An alternative argument is posed, if appropriate, OR strategies are suggested that would implement some of the context of the article. Writing approaches APA standards.
2 (5-6 marks)	The submission gives a summary of some of the key points in the reading. Examples from real-life settings partially and only loosely connect to the main points in the article and their implications for practice. The line of argument is weak and/or practical implications of the article are only partially addressed. Writing falls well short of APA standards.

TABLE 4: RUBRIC FOR MAJOR PAPER

Marks	EXPECTATIONS
4 (33-34-35 marks)	<p>The school or workplace PD plan builds strongly on the logic of acknowledged research in the field of teacher and leader growth and professional development. VG or EX</p> <p>The plan has a clear structure derived from most of the research variables and conclusions. VG or EX</p> <p>The research is skillfully linked to the context for the plan by means of relevant data. VG or EX</p> <p>Actionable priorities are clearly established in support of a compelling focus. VG or EX</p> <p>The writing is strongly focused and conforms to APA standards. VG or EX</p>
3 (31-32 marks)	<p>The school or workplace PD plan invokes a rationale partially derived from research in the field of teacher and leader growth and development. The structure of the plan derives from many of the research variables and conclusions, with appropriate presentation of workplace data. Actionable priorities are coherent and the focus is strong. The writing is focused and approaches APA standards.</p>
2 (29-30 marks)	<p>The school or workplace PD plan draws rather weakly on research in the field of teacher and leader growth and development. The plan addresses some of the research variables and conclusions, with only tenuous links to workplace data and characteristics. The writing lacks a coherent focus, and conforms only sporadically to APA standards.</p>
1 (less than 29 marks)	<p>The assignment is late OR weakly connected to two or less of the requirements OR addresses only one of the requirements.</p>

TABLE 5: GROUPS AND SUB-GROUPS FOR MODULE SUBMISSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Group A	Sub-Group	Group B	Sub-Group
	A1		B1
	A1		B1
	A1		B1
	A1		B1
	A2		B2
	A2		B2
	A2		B2
	A2		B2

FINAL MARKS

Based on the recorded grade for each of the assignments in Education 5500, the following grades will be assigned:

TABLE 6: GRADING SCHEDULE

A+	100-97	B+	89-87	C+	79-77	D+	69-67
A	96-93	B	86-83	C	76-73	D	66-63
A-	92-90	B-	82-80	C-	72-70	F	62 and less

N.B.: Any course with a final grade of less than B- cannot be considered for credit in the M.Ed. Program.

Additional References for Education 5500

The Course Outline provides references for each of the assigned readings. Some of you, however, may wish to broaden your reading for this course. Others may have a strong interest in pursuing further studies in this general domain.

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