771. Reflective Practice in the Professions

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Description

This course examines the relationship between theory and practice in professional education and development. It focuses on the use of action theories and action inquiry in education and other professional fields. It considers theoretical and practical mechanisms for overcoming barriers to organizational change, as well as strategies for promoting professional development and building learning communities within professional organizations. Faculty development (theory and method) provides the specific topical area of application for this course.

Objectives and approach

The primary objective of the course is to introduce students to a practice oriented approach to professional development, situated in the theories of professional effectiveness and reflective practice. Additional theories of action and reflection that inform the foundations for the course include: adult development (i.e. Jung’s theory of individuation); critical social theory (i.e. Habermas’s theory of communicative action); and moral reasoning (Kohlberg and alternatives). Action inquiry will be introduced as method.

The second objective is to introduce the content area of faculty development as a specialization within the general field of professional development. The specific topics related to faculty development include: the profession of faculty development and its principles of practice at a research university; interactive theatre as an educational tool for faculty development (with Jeffrey Steiger and an illustrative sketch by the CRLT Players); use of action research to foster faculty development and curricular reform; and leveraging external grants for maximum institutional impact (with Matt Kaplan discussing the Ford Foundation-funded Difficult Dialogues project). In addition, there will be opportunity for Q&A with Connie Cook (Associate Vice Provost and Director, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, and co-professor for the course) about the
ethics of the profession and the use of faculty development for institutional transformation.

The assignments, described after the list of texts (below), provide an opportunity for building personal, introspective and theory informed understandings of professional development. Assignments provide an opportunity to integrate concepts of professional development with the field of specialization, faculty development or another of the student choosing (chosen in relation to student interests).

Textbooks

_Ctools site has been set up for some of the required weekly reading. All of the reading for the faculty development portion of the course appears on Ctools, and all of it is required, not optional._

_required


St. John, E. P. (in press). _Action, reflection, and social justice: Integrating moral reasoning into professional development_. Hampton Press. (draft available to class on CTools)

Student Choice


Recommended (Required Chapters on CTools)


Suggested Readings


Assignments and Grading

Class Participation

It is crucial to the success of this course that students come to class prepared, having completed readings and assignments. Active participation in course and group discussions, therefore, is strongly encouraged. In addition students and auditors will be organized into small groups for discussion of the first and second assignment. Small group discussion will be organized outside of class time, given the extensive schedule for topics during course time. (Class participation will count as 10% of the grade).

Journal (Optional)

It could be extremely helpful to your progress in this course if you keep a reflective journal. Ideally you should use the journal to reflect on your normal discourse as a professional (teacher, researcher, or administrator) and a graduate student. If you keep a journal of this type, you will have material that you can use in the first three assignments. Suggestions to consider:

- At the beginning of each day take a few minutes to reflect in your journal about how you intend to approach the day (consider situations you might face and so forth).
- Record thoughts and insights during the day as they relate to your work and study.
- Reflect for a few minutes at the end of the day about events during the day, recollecting important dialogues (recording your feelings and interpretations of these dialogues).
- If you want feedback, leave every other page blank and submit to the professor whenever you would like. You are not required to hand in your journal, should you decide to keep one.

Assignment 1: Case Statement 1. The format for case statements is outlined in box 1. Timely completion of the assignment (including small group discussion) will be credited as 10% of the course grade. Select a dialogue you have had in a professional situation. It can be an intervention you recall from the past. Please select a conversation you are comfortable sharing. As an alternative, you can select a hypothetical intervention you might intend to make. (If it is hypothetical, please indicate this in the context statement.)
Assignment 1 must be turned in at the second session, January 22 (and must be sent by email if students do not attend class for any reason).

Assignment 2: Case Statement 2. Select a situation that occurred in the normal course of your daily work, preferably a situation in which you are trying to communicate with someone about an issue that concerns you. Your write up of the dialogue should follow the three-part format noted in assignment 1 (context, dialogue, analysis). Again, disguise the name(s) of other participant(s) in the dialogue. Assignment is due at the start of the fourth class session. This assignment, including small group discussion, will count as 10% of the grade.

Assignment 3: Praxis Paper. The major assignment is due at the start of the eighth week of the course and will count as 30% of the course grade. Based on your course readings, other readings based in your area of specialization, course discussions, and your own reflections (i.e., journal entries) write a paper that discusses the evolution of your professional praxis. At a minimum, the paper should consider:

- **Understanding of Professional Practice**—a discussion of historical practice, focusing on your personal theories in use (referencing your first two assignments and the small group discussion of these assignments, your own journal entries, and other recollections of your prior professional practice);

- **Vision of New Forms of Praxis**—develop a practical vision for how you might transform your professional praxis, either as an individual practitioner, or as a member of a community of practitioners;

- **Action Steps**—identify a set of action steps you can take as you attempt to move toward your vision of your future praxis;

- **Appendices**—append supporting materials, including your first two case statements and copies of relevant journal entries;

- **References**—the texts you used in the paper (use APA).

Assignment 4: Group Project. During the course, groups will be formed to work on collaborative projects. The Teaching Fellows will be available to help facilitate group projects, which will be mini ‘action experiments’ that enable members of class to practice aspects of action science. These projects will involve collaboration on the development of the design, working together on the experiment, and collaborating on the presentation of results and insights. (This assignment will count as 10% of the grade.)

Assignment 5: Final Paper. This is the second major assignment for the course. Alternative approaches to these assignments will be discussed in class and is due at the
last class session. (Assignment 5 will count as 30% of the course grade.) This paper can be:

- A preliminary design for an action-research project (or for a research project that builds an understanding of theories of action);

- An analysis of practical interventions (or experiments) in your professional setting (or in class); or

- A critical review of literature addressing a topic related to reflection in practice (possibly in relation to a particular field of professional education).

- References (use APA)

Box 1. Requirements for Case Statements

Please describe a challenging intervention or interaction with one or more individuals that (1) you have already experienced or (2) you expect to experience in the near future.

If you have difficulty with either of these conditions, try a hypothetical case in which you doubt your effectiveness.

Begin the description with a paragraph regarding your strategy. What were your objectives, how did you intend to achieve them, and why did you select those goals or strategies.

Next, write a few pages of the dialogue that actually occurred or that you expected to occur. Use the following format.

On this side of the page, write what was going on in your mind while each person in the dialogue (including yourself) was speaking. On this side of the page write what each person actually said or what you expected him/her to say. Continue writing the dialogue until you believe your major points are illustrated. (The dialogue should be at least two pages long.)

Finally, after your case, describe the underlying assumptions that you held about effective action.

Source: Arygris & Schon, 1974, p. 41.
Reading Assignments and Schedule

Week 1: Course Introduction (January 8)

The first course session will provide an overview of the course, including assignments, readings, and philosophy of the course. This semester the course will have a dual focus on faculty development and professional development across professions. We will discuss the two streams of the course and how students can use the assignments to construct their own learning strategies. Students are encouraged to read the introduction to *Action, Reflection, and Social Justice*.

Week 2: Theory of Professional Effectiveness (January 22)

This class session will focus on: a) Introduction of the theory of professional development (from Argyris and Schon) (9:00-10:30); and b) introduction to faculty development, including principles of practice (see assignment and readings below) (10:30-12:00). Assignment 1 is due.

**Required Readings**

- *Action reflection and Social Justice*, chapters 1 & 2
- *Argyris, Knowledge for Action*, chapters 1& 2
- Carefully review the CRLT website <http://crlt.umich.edu> to select five CRLT programs or services (be specific) that seem to you to be most useful for faculty development at a research university (as opposed to another type of institution). Be prepared to explain your choices.

Week 3: Reflective Practice (January 29)

This first half of the session (9:00-10:00) will explore concepts of reflective practice, including further discussion of models I and II and Schon’s ideas of teaching reflective practice. The second half of the session will focus on the use of theatre as an educational tool in faculty development (with Jeffrey Steiger and an illustrative sketch by the CRLT Players) (see readings below) (10:00 to 12:00).

**Required Reading**

- Schon, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, chapters 1 & 2


**Week 4: Individuation/Difficult Dialogues (February 5)**

This class session will: a) introduce the theory of individuation as the basis for theories of adult development (9:00-10:30); and b) explore the use of action research to foster faculty development and curricular reform (10:30-12:00).

**Required Readings**

- *Action, Reflection, and Social Justice*, Chapter 3

- Jung, *Psychology of Types*, Chapter I, The problem of types in classical and medieval thought

- Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Chapter VI, Consciousness, Unconsciousness, and Individuation


Week 5: Critical Theory (February 19)

The first half of the session (9:00-10:30) will focus on critical theory and interventions in educational organizations. The second half will focus on leveraging external grants for maximum institutional impact (with Matt Kaplan discussing the Ford Foundation’s Difficult Dialogues project) (10:30-12:00).

Required Readings

- Action, Reflection, and Social Justice, chapters

- Habermas, Moral consciousness and communicative action, (read first half, plus the conclusion).

- Division of Student Affairs at the University of Michigan. Religious and spiritual development of UM students. What’s on our students’ minds?


Week 6: Moral Reasoning/Faculty Development Q &A (March 5)

The class session will focus on: a) moral reasoning in relation to professional development (with collective speculation about how to integrate a focus on moral reasoning into practice) (9:00-10:30); and b) a question and answer session with Connie Cook about the ethics of the profession and the use of faculty development for institutional transformation (10:30-12:00).

Required Readings

- Action, Reflection, and Social Justice, Chapter 5

- Siddle Walker & Snarey. Race-ing moral development: African American perspectives on justice and care. (Read chapters by the editors—introduction and conclusion—plus other chapters that interest you.)

- Core Committee of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education. Ethical guidelines for educational developers. What is faculty development? <http://www.podnetwork.org/development/ethicalguidelines.htm>

*Week 7: Professional Development (March 12)*

This session will focus on the topic of professional practice. Students will have the opportunity to discuss their experiences with small group sessions on dialogues, as well as to try out ideas for their final praxis papers.

**Required Readings**

- *Action, Reflection, and Social Justice*, chapter 6

*Week 8: Praxis (March 19)*

The first half of the session will be devoted to student discussion of their praxis papers, including visions for future practice and action steps. The second half of the session will provide class meeting time to discuss possible group projects and final projects, along with strategies of using class time.

*Week 9: Designing Interventions (March 26)*

The first half of the class session will focus on the design and outcome of the Indiana Project on Academic Success (IPAS), a large scale intervention designed by Professor St. John (and also the topic of the course reading). The second half of the class will focus on the design strategies for interventions in different professional settings.

**Required Readings**

- *Action, Reflection, and Social Justice*, chapter 7

*Week 10: Integrating Theory and Practice (March 30)*

This session will focus on tying together the major themes of the course, including reflections on lessons learned from organizing interventions (the lessons learned chapter). Part of the class time will also be allocated for class projects and working group sessions.

**Required Readings**

- *Action, Reflection, and Social Justice*, chapter 8

*Weeks 11-13: Group and Individual Projects (April 2 & 9)*

These sessions will be organized by students to discuss their group projects and
projects for their final papers. Class meeting will be conducted over the term to develop strategies for communicating work from these action projects.

*Week 14: Learning from Experience (April 16)*

The professors have approached this course as a pilot test of their ideas about graduate professional education and faculty development. The final class session will be dedicated to conversation about students’ understandings from the course, their critical appraisal of the course, and strategies they will use in their professional practices. Students can schedule individual meetings with the professor (scheduled during finals week) to discuss the class and receive feedback.