

EDUCATION

Introspective Inquiry: Self-Study and Its Relevance in Teacher Education

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As teachers inevitably model their teaching on their own experiences, those who educate teachers must remain conscious of their own actions in the classroom, lest unwelcome behaviors or ineffective methods resurface in their students' future teaching. Therefore, self-study of one's professional practice is an invaluable tool for evaluating efficacy in the classroom. This study evaluated the teaching practices of Professor Melanie Shoffner (English education) in ENGL 49200, an undergraduate methods course. The study examined the specific methods, strategies, and interactions Shoffner uses in her teaching in order to consider how her instruction does—or does not—support the development of her students. Data for the study consisted of my observational notes from multiple classes and my review of literature on self-study and relational teaching. During each observation, I used an observational framework of my own design that recorded students' participation and determined the level of their engagement in classroom discussion, in addition to noting specific interactions between student and instructor. By analyzing repetitions and common themes from my observations, spanning an entire semester, I concluded that student engagement in the classroom was dependent on a variety of classroom activities, such as discussion, group work, and lectures. In addition, I found that students' willingness to participate hinged on the

professor's use of positive reinforcement, communicated through facial and verbal interaction. These findings suggest that professors must be conscious of their choices in the classroom: seemingly insignificant acts of instruction and interaction can greatly influence students' development as future teachers.

Research advisor Melanie Shoffner writes, "As Neil has shown through his research, small acts in the classroom can unconsciously influence student learning in meaningful ways. Admittedly, focusing a critical eye on one's own teaching can be uncomfortable at times, but intellectual discomfort can also lead to growth, for both the professor and the students."



Professor Shoffner and her ENGL 49200 class, during a typical classroom discussion.