

Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

Samaras, A. P., Kayler, M.A., Rigsby, L.C., Weller, K. L., & Wilcox, D. R. (2006). Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching in a non-traditional teacher education program. *Studying Teacher Education*, 2(1), 43 – 57.

**Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching in a non-traditional  
teacher education program**

**Anastasia P. Samaras, Mary A. Kayler, Leo C. Rigsby, Karen L. Weller, and**

**Dawn Renee Wilcox**

**George Mason University, Virginia**

**Abstract**

We share our self-study research of faculty building a successful collaborative culture and team teaching experience in a unique Master's program for PK-12 practicing teachers. As part of self-study and reflective practice, this particular faculty team shared its collaborative experiences with teachers. This transparency impacted teachers' perceptions of faculty and their own teaming experiences. To frame our work, we use the notion of learning zones (Samaras, 2002, 2004), adapted from Vygotsky's (1978) conception of zone of proximal development. A multi-vocal perspective on the processes of faculty professional development and program development is presented.

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

Despite calls for collaborative teaching practices, building collaborative cultures, and self-study of those practices (Clandinin, 1993; LaBoskey, Davies-Samway, & Garcia, 1998), many schools of education continue to support practices that preserve the status quo of the isolated teacher educator. Teacher education reformers claim that teacher development is hindered by this teacher isolation in schools devoid of collegial discourse, critical inquiry, and action research in authentic settings (Darling-Hammond, 1993; Goodlad, 1994). Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) state that research is needed on the development of collegiality within schools because it has the potential of offering teachers and mentors opportunities to learn from each other. Addressing the mentorship of student teachers, they state that when student teachers are exposed to collegial school environments with teachers jointly planning, teaching, and evaluating their own and their students' performance, it helps the student teacher acknowledge that learning to teach is an ongoing enterprise. This point is equally important for inservice teachers in professional development programs and for faculty of those programs yet the self-study of crafting faculty collegiality and successful team teaching teams has not been widely studied.

As teacher educators we attempt to encourage teachers to work collaboratively and reflect on their practice; however, we do not often do that for ourselves. Faculty team teaching invites critical inquiry which may lead to discovery of new patterns of transformative and comprehensive connections. Team members on interdisciplinary teams use different problem-solving techniques, take on various roles, and influence and are influenced by

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

others as they work on a common problem or task (Lattuca, 2001). Our program is responsive to Boyer's (1990) call for a scholarship of integration where professors cross disciplinary boundaries "forcing new topologies of knowledge" (p. 19) and the complexities of that integration.

In this paper, we share a faculty team's self-study of their teaming experiences. Each team member brings her/his different perspectives, disciplines, and understandings to each task. The sharing of those differences is what fascinates us and calls us to examine this dynamic context. Three separate voices are represented in our analysis: teacher educators in general, Anastasia's voice as director and colleague, and the voice(s) of the three faculty team members. These voices represent multiple perspectives on the processes of teacher and faculty development. Self-study is used as a methodology to inform our work of teaching and learning about teaching. The research question that drives this paper is: How did this team craft such a productive and congenial work environment?

### **Theoretical Framework**

At the center of the program design and curriculum is a commitment to learn with and through others which aligns with our investigative sociocultural lens and the concept of *learning zones* (i.e., spheres of knowledge construction); a concept developed by Samaras (2002, 2004) and adapted from Vygotsky's (1978) conception of zone of proximal development. Learning zones are defined as joint activity between individuals in a learning context with effort to present perspectives and construct knowledge.

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

Learning zones are organic and occur in diverse communities of expertise where learners co-mediate, negotiate, and socially construct an understanding of a shared task. Vygotsky spoke of a zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85). Our program provides multiple opportunities or spheres of learning for teachers and faculty to share their differing gifts, multiple intelligences and perspectives. It also encourages dialogue of their maturing and nascent understandings of who they are as learners and teachers. In effect, they assist each other’s development through their collaborative problem solving within their ZPDs. Their critical dialogue around diverse issues provokes and assists each to challenge her/his own ideas as well as to challenge each others’ assumptions about teaching. This research suggests that this peer scaffolding through such collaboration is an important path to faculty professional development.

Learner-centered teaching (Weimer, 2002) shares this constructivist orientation toward knowledge and also frames this research. From Anastasia’s perspective, a most interesting facet of this team is their weaving of theoretical perspectives. In terms of the theoretical ideas that have guided this team’s teaching, a number of overlapping and complementary, but historically distinct, pedagogical perspectives contribute to their work. Most directly their work has drawn from Brookfield (1995) and Weimer (2002). They in turn draw from literatures from the following perspectives: feminist pedagogy, critical pedagogy, cooperative learning, cognitive and educational psychology, life-long

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

learning and a constructivist knowledge orientation (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978).

Another logical foundation of learner-centered theory comes from a work group of the American Psychological Association's Board of Educational Affairs (1997). Their principles lay out the cognitive and metacognitive elements, the motivational and affective elements, the developmental and social elements, and aspects of individual differences that affect learning. This faculty teaching team developed a curriculum and pedagogy guided by this broad body of knowledge.

Within the broad aims of *Initiatives in Educational Transformation (IET) Beliefs and Principles* and consistent with its commitments to transformation, the team has intended to empower teachers in their cohort to set and pursue personal learning goals. The curriculum and learning strategies explicitly recognize that learners bring different learning resources (developed abilities, interests, prior experience, and learning potentials) to this learning experience. The intentional curriculum includes support for teachers reflecting deeply on their assumptions and their choices as they work toward their goals. Since this team believes that different reflection strategies serve different needs and learning strengths, they have deliberately employed a variety of reflection tools and opportunities to encourage the development and use of metacognitive strategies that they believe are essential to sustaining continuous professional development. In particular, they have sought to develop the ability of teachers to employ data from their journals and classrooms to evaluate the efficacy of their strategies and to form the basis for planning next steps. In order to model these processes the team has made self-study feedback and reflection on their own pedagogy a key focus of the pedagogy itself.

### **Context**

The team are faculty in IET, a school-based Master's program for PK-12 practicing teachers within the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University (GMU). Since 1992, over 1,500 classroom teachers coming from school divisions and districts across Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia have joined IET classes that meet on GMU's Prince William and Arlington campuses. IET currently has classes of 50-100 teachers working with five faculty teaching teams. This teaching team was created for the Prince William Class of 2005. Our non-traditional, teacher and family-friendly schedule attracts teachers, teacher specialists, and administrators to work together in teaching teams in three intensive summer sessions and 16 daylong classes over a two-year period. Enrolled teachers exhibit wide variability in their level of teaching experience, ranging from one year to over 20 years. Teachers conduct classroom action research projects in the first year and team-based research projects in their second year. The content and practicality of their study arises from their concerns in classroom and school contexts.

The IET curriculum is designed to support practicing teachers' professional development and practice through the lenses of ethical and moral professionalism, self-study, narrative inquiry, action research, and professional collaboration. We work to help teachers craft a sense of who they are, what they believe in, where their beliefs come from and what the answers mean to their students. The program especially encourages teachers to stay in their classrooms as they work to improve schooling and continue to develop as

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

professionals. Critical dialogue in class, teams, and web-based discussions are tools for teachers' deep reflection, development of professional voice, improved writing for communication, collaborative learning, mentoring, and personal and professional transformation (DeMulder & Rigsby, 2003; Kayler, 2004). Teachers meet weekly in their school teams to share their progress on projects, get peer feedback, and engage in critical dialogue on the various interpretations of their realities. IET faculty participate in those meetings on several occasions each semester at teachers' schools.

As stated in the *IET Beliefs and Principles* document: "Working together is complex and difficult and requires considerable energy and dedication. Collaborative communities have mutual perspectives as well as multiple individual perspectives. Individual perspectives frequently have overlapping interests, areas of expertise, and unique strengths and weaknesses." The curriculum affords multiple opportunities for learning with and through others. Knowledge is distributed across teachers in school teams, in advising sessions and school visits, and among faculty. Teamwork in IET might be similar to what John-Steiner (2000) calls interdisciplinary "thought communities." She notes that insights are gained from exposure to a variety of fields that integrate ideas from multiple perspectives. We look at a teaching team that exemplifies that integration and social constructivist learning. We share stories of sociocultural and collaborative experiences which impact our research and teaching lens.

Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

## **Participants**

### *Anastasia's Story*

The year is 1971. I am standing outside the home of a young African American girl in an urban housing project district, directly across the street from the university where I am pursuing a teaching degree. Each week, I enter into this community that looks very different from my own to tutor this child. I listen to her read and try to figure out what she doesn't understand. In that process, I study my role in our interchange and struggle to make sense of how this connects to what I am learning. I see this child as a competent and complex social being who is motivated by, and learns from, social interaction and relationships with others. Indeed, 19 years later that would become my dissertation. And 33 years later I would still be passionate about mentoring structures for students and faculty and the self-study of those practices.

I am a self-study teacher educator who has also been influenced by my culture, context, and history (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger, 2004) as well as my many years of teaching in public schools and colleges and directing teacher education programs. My teaching and research are connected to my experiences in growing up in an ethnic family, my studies in developmental psychology, human development, early childhood education, teacher education, and Vygotskian theory. I was always interested in how people learn with each other, especially through dialogue (Samaras, 1995). Regardless of who I taught, my query was always the same: What conditions for learning do I create within my own classroom and what difference does that make in my students' learning? Over time, my pedagogical knowledge extended from my work with children to their teachers. I conducted



## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

collaborative research in a Vygotskian approach in teaching preservice and inservice teachers (Samaras & Gismondi, 1998). Due to my earlier and successful team teaching experiences (Samaras, Straits, & Patrick, 1998; Samaras, Howard, & Wende, 2000; Samaras & Reed, 2000), I was attracted to IETs interdisciplinarity and team teaching. I began visiting each team's planning and class days to gain a better understanding of the program. I noticed the synergy of a particular teaching team which became the focus of this research.

### *Mary's Story*

I began my teaching career working in several junior high/middle schools teaching social studies from a social science perspective. Early on in my career I worked to design and develop curriculum that would engage my students and help them appreciate the value of history and the social sciences by connecting to their lived experiences. I found that as I developed my teaching expertise I was drawn to constructing collaborative learning experiences for my students. I observed that under these circumstances my students were more engaged and appeared to have fun while they learned new content. During my seventh year of teaching I was working in a junior high school that transitioned to a middle school philosophy. I, along with three other teachers, volunteered to implement an interdisciplinary teaming model prior to school wide implementation of a middle school philosophy. From a professional development perspective I was hungry to try something new and I looked forward to crafting an integrated curriculum from the four content areas. I continued this work for two years before I headed off to Syracuse University to pursue my Masters Degree in Social Studies education.

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

While attending Syracuse University I was selected to participate in *The Future Professoriate Project* which was designed to mentor graduate students into the world of academe. During my doctoral work I taught several entry level education courses and constructed collaborative learning experiences for undergraduates. After I completed my Masters in Social Studies education and Ph.D. in Teaching and Curriculum I accepted my first position at a small, traditional liberal arts college where I struggled to implement collaborative learning experiences for my students in a culture that valued individualism and “professor as the giver of information.” Prior to this experience I had positive experiences working collaboratively with colleagues and with implementing collaborative learning in my teaching practices. I found that it was necessary to find a place where I would be able to practice collaboration within my teaching and with my colleagues. I have been delighted, challenged and have grown as a professional in IET where collaboration is at the heart of its practice.

### ***Karen’s Story***

My collaborative experience has encompassed my entire teaching career. I was a middle school science teacher for 8 years at which time I was the team leader for an integrated English, social studies, math, and science team. These years demonstrated to me the fine art of collaboration, the role which cooperation, personalities and shared goals determined the fruitfulness of a team. Upon receiving my Master’s degree from Northern Arizona University (NAU) I taught individual pre-service courses. Teaching in isolation seemed normal at that university level, however upon entering my doctoral program at

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

NAU I taught in the Integrated Secondary Teacher Education Program. As a graduate assistant I co-taught with two professors. The difference from my middle school experience is the presence of a hierarchical structure. Whereas in the middle school all team teachers were equals, at the university level I was definitely the graduate assistant. I joined IET as an assistant professor and have been teaming with Leo and Mary for a year and a half. The entire context of our teaching is woven into a single voice prior to class days. Also there is no essence of hierarchy on our team. As the newcomer I am on equal intellectual, curricular and instructional footing as both Mary and Leo. I believe that it is this foundation that makes our team particularly successful; there is not individual ownership or competition within our team.

### *Leo's Story*

For the first twenty years of my thirty-six years of teaching, I was a pretty typical faculty member who taught and thought in isolation from discourse about teaching and learning. In the mid 1980s I was asked by my department to teach a one credit course on Teaching Sociology for our beginning graduate teaching assistants. In reading and preparing for that course, I had my first encounter with research and theory on teaching and learning. This experience led me to reflect seriously on my own teaching for the first time. Shortly thereafter, a sociology colleague and I organized a year-long 16 credit integrated learning experience for first year students at Temple University. The experience focused on Evolution and included eight faculty members from seven disciplines. Jointly planning and teaching this course fostered my developing interdisciplinary and multiple perspectives. Moving to GMU to IET in 1996 caused me to become more focused on

Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

learner-centered teaching. I came to understand the importance of different learning styles as we worked with large groups of teachers on eight-hour class days. Two years ago I began thinking ahead to the cohort that would enter our program in the summer of 2003 and I encountered Weimer's *Learner-Centered Teaching* (2002). Suddenly, a number of bits and pieces of insights about teaching and learning fell into place. I had a language and theoretical framework to make sense of many of the experiences I had over the previous thirty-six years.

### **Our Teaching Team**

Mary and Karen are both assistant professors who are in their fourth and first year respectively in the tenure process. Both Mary and Leo had worked with earlier classes and had experienced different styles of collaboration. Both were anxious to be more conscious and planful about crafting a congenial teaming context. Mary wanted to make explicit her expectations and desires: respect for different working styles and support for individual research interests. Leo was committed to making our teaming experience responsive to individual learning preferences so that each member could feel valued. Prior to Karen's arrival, Leo and Mary discussed the need to create an inviting and supportive team. Karen was hired only two weeks prior to our first two-week intensive summer session. She was committed to participating fully in our team even though she had a fast induction and had to work with an already formulated curriculum for the summer session. During that time Mary and Leo worked to articulate the IET experience with Karen while continuing to work out and extend its meaning for ourselves. Together

Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

we agreed to use Weimer's (2002) writing on learner-centered teaching as a framework and language to craft pedagogy.

Mary serves as team leader and with Leo and Karen, they co-plan and co-teach 64 teachers. We typically meet two days a week for team planning, curriculum development and processing class feedback from previous class days to inform our practice. Students are asked to complete an on-line survey adapted from Brookfield's (1995) Critical Incident Survey to provide us feedback on their experiences and perceptions of each class day. We use this feedback to critically inform our planning and structure of future class days. These data sets also facilitate individual and team research agendas about learner-centered theory and critical pedagogy. We feel that this critical dialogue with our students provides great depth to our discussions during our team meetings. We develop short-term and long-term planning and course syllabi in a context rich with data from our students on learning preferences, different learning contexts, and a sense of where they are in their own trajectory of professional development.

### **Data Collection**

Anastasia, having observed some of our team planning meetings and class days, asked us if we were willing to be interviewed by Dawn Renee, an elementary school teacher and doctoral candidate in the GMU Educational Leadership program working with her. We eagerly agreed. We have been collecting feedback on students' perceptions of their own

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

learning experiences to inform our planning and research. The individual interviews allowed us to probe our individual beliefs behind that dynamic.

Dawn Renee conducted interviews with each team member lasting about one hour. She asked questions within three main domains: (1) our prior experiences in team teaching, (2) our perceptions of working on the team, and (3) our perceptions of self on the team. Additionally, Mary was asked questions about how she understood her role as team leader and particularly as it related to inducting new faculty. Tape-recorded interviews were transcribed via voice-recognition software. Dawn Renee worked to clean the transcriptions for accuracy using back-up audio and video tapes.

We individually read and re-read the interviews noting patterns and themes. We met numerous times to discuss our impressions and to compare and triangulate our individual analyses. Dawn Renee also conducted a theme analysis to validate and code-check our findings. Several broad categories were identified using the constant comparison method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). For example, we catalogued numerous statements across the interviews about shared commitments. We collapsed and renamed themes that addressed the same findings and revisited the transcripts to consider whether there was substantial support for other themes identified. Our data analysis identified four dominant themes: shared commitments; a community of support; learning styles and multiple perspectives; and modeling pedagogy and self-study. We conducted a collective analysis by the research team and present our findings through the faculty team voices.

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

### **Findings**

Without Anastasia asking us to participate in a self-study, we would not have studied ourselves in such depth. The opportunity to participate in a team self study has been interesting and valuable as we each have gained a deeper understanding of our collaborations, have acquired a vocabulary to articulate our work, and have refined our understandings of learner-centered theory and critical pedagogy in practice. The nature and quality of our collaborative efforts have continued to develop through this self-study process. What follows next are the voices of the participants from the inside (the faculty teaching team) and from the outside (a colleague) looking in as we share dominant themes of how the team crafted a productive and congenial work environment.

### ***Shared Commitments***

We share a strong commitment to our work, to our students, and to each other. In our interviews we each discussed how these commitments have provided us with a strong team foundation. We have a shared commitment to learner-centered teaching, thorough planning, and spending the time and energy needed to get the job done. Crafting shared expectations together deepened our reciprocal respect and trust and allowed us space and freedom to engage in our own professional development.

Mary stated:

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

I would say in our teaming situation all three of us are committed. We all have high expectations of our program in terms of giving our teachers quality curriculum experiences; a quality program that they can walk out of and feel good about participating in. I have high expectations and I know Leo and Karen also have high expectations to do our work and to not let each other down.

Karen remarked:

I think it's good to have seasoned people on each of the teams which doesn't express a commitment to doing things like they've been done in the past but rather expresses the commitment to understanding the overall shape of the work in what needs to get done and a commitment to a process rather than a commitment to curricular content.

Leo reflected:

Anytime you're working with people who value and respect you, respect in a sense that they're willing to challenge, you just have to feel good about that work situation. I certainly have experienced that with Mary and Karen.

Accountability in a trusting relationship appears to have helped refine and solidify our commitment to each other. Together we have crafted a place for us to engage in work that



Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

is meaningful to our program and professional development. The time we spend together is focused and respectful of our shared commitments.

As teammates, we promote and value each other's teaching, research, writing, and professional development. We recognize that we come from vastly different backgrounds. This diversity has both enriched and challenged our own personal and professional understandings. For example, Karen and Leo are polar opposites in their political and religious views. But, because we are open to multiple perspectives, we allow our conversations to move in meaningful ways for each of us rather than in one set direction or perspective as the "only way." In other words, no single individual dominates or hinders the voices of the others. Mary stated, "the three of us come to the table ... we're committed to these things, yet we're very open at the same time so I don't feel like any one of us is pushing our own personal agenda. Based upon our mutual respect we were able to make a commitment to a team agenda versus any personal agendas."

In essence, we have created our own learner-centered community. Much to our surprise, our collaboration has taught us many things about each others' disciplines, world views, teaching styles, learning preferences, and personal lives. We each feel coming to our team meetings will be an enriching experience in multiple ways. Our shared commitments have allowed us to create a community of support which has impacted our professional work.

Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

### *A Community of Support*

We spent a great deal of time talking with each other about what each of us must have in order to feel valued and capable of producing high quality work. Critical dialogue was a central feature to our teaming collaborations. Our shared expectation as team members was to help each other analyze and formulate our arguments and ideas to deepen individual understandings. A strength of our team is the ability to learn from each other and talk about pedagogy from our diverse perspectives. Mary said, “If Leo or Karen or I bring an idea to the table the three of us sit there and we play with it and we mold it and we shape it and we always connect it back to purpose.” Leo reflected, “... that makes me feel like a valued member if I know both that I’ll be listened to and that I’ll be challenged.” Karen commented on: “... having looked at it through their eyes and really seeing it differently than I would have ever seen it on my own...” Critical dialogue refined and moved our thinking forward which has made us more effective teachers and colleagues.

Early on in our teaming experiences we talked about conducting joint research studies and writing about curriculum development. As a team, we systematically collected data to document and evaluate our work. We frequently shared individual and collaborative writings with each other and gave each other productive feedback. We held ourselves accountable to the critical inquiry and reflection that we expected of our students. For example, we require our students to participate in writer’s workshops on all of their written work; so as a team we also encourage each others’ writing through critical feedback. Karen reported: “Leo challenges me to really take time to write.” Mary stated:

Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

“We are all very much aware of what each other is working on and we all also try to figure out how we can support each other.” Working collaboratively on joint research projects provided support and feedback to deepen our research understandings and productivity. The role of critical friends working in a safe environment has taken our professional goals and development to a higher level.

### ***Learning Styles and Multiple Perspectives***

In order to help our students understand their own assumptions, perspectives on teaching and learning, and past experiences, we have employed a variety of learning preference tools in our teaching. Along with the students, we have completed multiple learning preference tools (i.e., Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), (Myers & McCaulley, 1987), multiple intelligences, and adult development models). These tools allowed us to talk freely about our preferences and ask probing questions without offending each other. For example, using the MBTI, we talked about Karen’s need to be logical and linear. Leo articulated his preference to write out justifications for assignments before talking about them and then to reshape/refine understandings through conversation. Mary often stated a desire to vary learning experiences and the organization of class days. Without drawing upon these tools, individual preferences could have resulted in frustrations during collaboration. Working within an explicit acknowledgement of our preferences created a safe environment for us to stretch, grow, and question ourselves as a new layer to our professional development.

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

Our knowledge of learning styles and perspectives has challenged us to develop curriculum that supports diverse learners and would not have occurred if we were working in isolation. We frequently draw upon these understandings in developing curriculum experiences for our class. Mary exclaimed, “That mixture of us together enables us to come out with class days that really touch on meaningful curriculum work... Leo is so open to trying new things. Karen and I sometimes drive him crazy because we’ll start talking about this and then we talk about that. We really talk through those things and then Leo helps us see things from perspectives that we may not have seen.” Leo reflects, “I’ve learned that it’s important to listen, to think through and imagine where are they coming from, how did they arrive at that point to make the argument they’re making.” Karen conveyed “The biggest part is that they come from different perspectives than I do and how we put something on the table which we all expected to be fairly cut and dry ends up being mulled over for days. I really like being in an environment where I’m challenged and where I feel like I can challenge other’s ideas... people are willing to change things until it’s a better product.” Explicit knowledge of our preferences has enabled us to work effectively together as we have co-created and refined a learner-centered curriculum that respects our needs as colleagues and also the needs of our learners.

### ***Modeling Pedagogy and Self-Study***

The greatest outcome for our colleague practice has been the development of a working environment which parallels the work we ask our teachers to do in their school-based teams. For example, the development of our learner-centered curriculum demands an

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

examination of structure, power and agency. Learner-centered pedagogy addresses the importance of making instructional decisions, processes, and feedback visible to students. We felt that we would be remiss to not share our collaborative processes and outcomes with our students. We are committed to modeling collaboration and action research on our teaching practices. We overtly model the process for students because we want them to know that we are doing what we are asking them to do. When asked if she thought her teaming experience was authentic to what they ask their students to do, Karen exclaims:

We ask them to be critical of one another, not only in their work, but with their ideas and what they've read. We very much reflect that process because we will say this is what we're doing and let us tell you the conversations it took to get to this place and this is the compromise that we came to. I think it helps them be more willing to participate. We don't always agree and they know that we don't always agree and I think that's good for them to see as well that we can come to a working place.

Our decision to use a learner-centered teaching framework provided a common starting place for our teaming and curriculum development. Despite our diverse experiences and perspectives, our team has been able to come together around ideas of learner-centered theory and critical pedagogy to craft a common agenda. We used the tools we had given our students to think about our own work processes, beliefs and assumptions. Our commitment to evaluating what we are doing through self-study has assured us that the pedagogy is meeting the needs of learners and has given us a framework to circle back

Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

and interrogate what we have done, are doing, and should do next. Curriculum and strategies we have used to involve our teachers in that learning have enabled us to go beyond differences and momentary irritations because we see the power of the pedagogy. As a result of our collaborations, we constructed our understandings together and the outcome has been an integrated curriculum of critical pedagogy and learner-centered teaching. We learned it together and grappled amongst ourselves to find a workable place to situate our newly emerging sense of learner-centered teaching. We now share a language to theorize our work even though we come from different disciplines, perspectives, and backgrounds.

## **Discussion**

### ***Anastasia's Reflections***

At an individual level, faculty working in isolation is common place but where a culture of collaboration exists little is known about the personal and professional impact of collaborative experiences. As teacher educators we are asked little about our teaching and offer little to others about ourselves (Samaras, 1998). An interest in self-study research must come from the teacher educator who is willing to utilize the knowledge gained through examining “the self” to reframe and better understand practice and provide meaningful learning experiences for their students. That in turn can lead to an improved understanding of curriculum as demonstrated by this teaching team. Using a variety of tools for assessing learning preferences and work styles in their teaching, pushed them to

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

apply those tools to deepen their understanding of their learning preferences and work styles. Additionally, by modeling their developing understanding of their work processes to their students, they further developed that understanding.

From my Vygotskian perspective, this study suggests that there was a community of practice apprenticing and welcoming a newcomer into the complexities of the IET culture. That is, Mary and Leo worked to induct Karen and support her on a personal and professional level. The learning occurred during their everyday practice of planning, teaching, and evaluating, i.e., it was situated cognition (Lave and Wenger, 1981). From the beginning of their work as a team, they valued her contributions. Wenger (1998) states, “Newcomers must be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members” (p. 101). Karen speaks of her entry into this academic community, her need to be the right person and “not to disappoint them” and to “have something valuable to contribute.” She remarks that “... it’s an environment that’s easy to make mistakes in and easy to ask questions.”

The team quickly began to recognize and support each other around shared tasks and goals and within a generational community of multiple and differing experiences and talents. The team emphasized to me on numerous occasions that they experience the learning processes and support as a mutual and multi-way phenomenon. Within their activity, there was mediation, problem solving, negotiation, and socially constructed new understandings that aligned with the allure of learner-centered teaching. Further research in the induction of other faculty who are new to the IET program is underway. This

Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

research contributes to our understanding of that process. It is worthy of further study in a program that has increased its student enrollment to such an extent in the last three years that it has doubled the number of faculty new to IET.

At the program level, I have thought deeply about the impact of this research on faculty's professional development and program development. I believe this research has rekindled attention about the authenticity of our *IET Beliefs and Principles* regarding work on teams. As a constantly transforming program, we often talk about the many things we want for IET. Faculty are calling for a deeper exchange and reflection about our teaching and curricular designs. We question how we can build upon the expertise of our faculty to promote learning for teachers while we also build each other's teaching repertoire and knowledge base instead of operating as separate teaching pods. Several faculty have noted that the ideology of the program seems to be stronger than the difficulties that result from a combination of many personalities and perspectives on faculty teaching teams. However, I believe that notion is only viable if we continue to study our practice and how it aligns or misaligns to our shared beliefs and principles.

### **Conclusion**

This study offers an interesting meta-conversation within a successful faculty teaching team who have been enriched from the multiple perspectives. They support and respect their differing gifts and are not only willing, but eager, to learn from each other. As teammates, they scaffold, promote, and value each other's teaching, research, writing,



Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

and professional development. The team exemplifies the importance of critical friends and teacher collaboration. There is a constant compromise, a commitment to quality in curriculum development, and above all a commitment to their students' learning. They model their pedagogy which they believe is key to their student's learning. This study demonstrates how teachers can form and reform curriculum and disrupts the notion that teaching is limited to individual repertoires and a set curriculum.

Self-study was useful in unpacking the success of this faculty teaching team. That conversation, in and of itself, is useful to their continuous teamwork. This study was driven by the participants' question: How do we craft our faculty team teaching experience in a way that is productive for our students and our professional development? That inquiry, situated in their personal and professional experiences, allowed them to question the taken-for-granted assumptions that undergrid their everyday teaching practices. The notion of self-study was readily attractive to this faculty teaching team. They were in essence conducting an examination of the impact of their teaching on their students' learning and constantly adapting their teaching according to the needs of their students although they had not named it as self-study. The research has helped us examine, with local knowledge, our assumptions about how a team crafted a successful teaming experience to the advancement of their professional development. Their bold efforts in self-study research may entice other faculty teaching teams in IET to utilize a self-study methodology to examine teaming practice. Self-study holds much promise for further faculty professional development and program development.

## References

- American Psychological Association's Board of Educational Affairs (1997). Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: A Framework for School Reform & Redesign. Retrieved September 28, 2004 from <http://www.apa.org/ed/lcpnewtext.html>.
- Bogden, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Boyer, E. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professorate*. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Princeton University Press.
- Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Calderhead, J., & Shorrock, S. B. (1997). *Understanding teacher education: Case studies in the professional development of beginning teachers*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Clandinin, D. J. (1993). Learning to collaborate at the university: Finding our places with each other. In D. J. Clandinin, A. Davies, P. Hogan & B. Kennard (Eds.), *Learning to teach, teaching to learn: Stories of collaboration in teacher education* (pp. 177-186). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1993). Reforming the school reform agenda. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 74, 752-761.
- DeMulder, E. K. & Rigsby, L. C. (2003). Teachers' voices on reflective practice. *Reflective Practice*, 4, 267-290.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan.

## Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

- Goodlad, J. (1994). *Educational renewal: Better teachers, better schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- John-Steiner, V. (2000). *Creative collaboration*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kayler, M. (2004). Portfolio assessment and teacher development. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 8, 265-274.
- LaBoskey, V., Davies-Samway, K., & Garcia, S. (1998). Cross-institutional action research: A collaborative self-study. In M. L. Hamilton, S. Pinnegar, T. Russell, J. Loughran & V. LaBoskey (Eds.), *Reconceptualizing teaching practice: Self-study in teacher education* (pp. 154-166). London: Falmer Press.
- Lattuca, L. R. (2001). *Creating interdisciplinarity: Interdisciplinary research and teaching among college and university faculty*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Myers, I. Briggs, & McCaulley, M. H. (1987). *Myers-Briggs type indicator*. Palo Alto, CA: California Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Samaras, A. P. (1995). My Journey to Ithaca: Reflections of a teacher educator. *Teaching Education*, 7(1), 96-101.
- Samaras, A. P. (1998). Finding my way: Teaching methods courses from a sociocultural perspective. In A. L. Cole, R. Elijah & J. G. Knowles (Eds.). *The heart of the matter: Teacher educators and teacher education reform* (pp. 55-79). San Francisco, CA, Caddo Gap Press.
- Samaras, A. P. (2002). *Self-study for teacher educators: Crafting a pedagogy for educational change*. New York: Peter Lang.

Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

- Samaras, A. P. (2004). *Learning zones: Potentials for cognitive change in teacher education programs*. Invited talk. University of Hawaii, Department of Education, Honolulu, Hawaii.
- Samaras, A. P. & Gismondi, S. (1998). Scaffolds in the field: Vygotskian interpretation in a teacher education program. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 14*, 715-733.
- Samaras, A. P., Hicks, M. A., Garvey Berger, J. (2004). Self-study through personal history. In J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey, & T. Russell (Eds.). *The international handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (pp. 905-942). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Samaras, A. P., Howard, B. J., & Wende, C. (2000). Kyoto Redoux: Assessment of an environmental science collaborative learning project for undergraduate, non-science majors. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education, 5*, 1-22.
- Samaras, A. P., Straits, S. A., & Patrick, S. S. (1998). Collaborating through movement across disciplines and schools. *Teaching Education, 9*(2), 11-20.
- Samaras, A. P. with contributions by Reed, R. L. (2000). Transcending traditional boundaries through drama: Interdisciplinary teaching and perspective-taking. In J. Loughran & T. Russell (Eds.), *Exploring myths and legends of teacher education: The proceedings of the Third International Conference on the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices*, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England (pp. 218-222). Kingston, Ontario: Queen's University.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Self-study of the craft of faculty team teaching

Weimer, M. (2002). *Learner-centered teaching: Five key changes to practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.