Southwest Minnesota State University
School of Education
Conceptual Framework

Inclusive Communities of Practice Investigating Learning and Teaching

SMSU School of Education Mission:

The mission of the Professional Education programs at SMSU is to create inclusive communities of practice where each learner is an active participant in the investigation of learning, teaching, and leadership processes. Teachers and learners will engage in educational theory, research, inquiry, critical reflection, and application in pursuit of excellence in a culturally responsive education.

SMSU School of Education Vision:
Inclusive communities of practice investigating learning and teaching.

Description of the Conceptual Framework

The School of Education at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) is comprised of the undergraduate and graduate faculty and the Dean of Business, Education, Professional and Graduate Studies responsible for educator licensure programs. Undergraduate and graduate educator licensure candidates demonstrate the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice and the standards of the SMSU framework *Inclusive Communities of Practice Investigating Learning and Teaching.* The non-licensure graduate students demonstrate the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards plus one additional SMSU standard in educator leadership. The framework illustrates a relationship between learning and teaching in the context of participation in communities and globally.

Inclusive Communities of Practice

Communities are social units where people live and work together in a variety of ways and places. In communities, people participate in communication, negotiation, ownership, values definition, and socio-cultural interactions. Inclusive Communities of Practice provide opportunities for educators to experience authentic, caring relationships. Participation in purposeful, inquiring, inclusive communities is critical for effective learning. (Banks &McGee Banks, 2003; Boyer, 1995; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Jalongo, Jalongo, & Elam, 1991; Peck, 1987; Palloff, R.M. & Pratt, K. 1999; Senge, Kleiner, Cambron-McCabe, Smith, Lucas, & Dutton, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1994; Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Wald & Castleberry, 2000; Wenger, 1998; Garrison, 2011; Oakes, Lipton, Anderson, & Stillman, 2016).

Community members are continually involved with collaborative projects, resulting in practices that reflect these efforts and social relationships. Practice involves experiencing global communities constructing meaning out of participation. Wenger defines "practice" as a "way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that sustain mutual engagement in action" (1998, p.5). Learners and educators reflect upon their practices, make decisions as they implement instruction, and interact with peers. As professionals reflect throughout their practice, theories are examined to inform practice. Members of Inclusive Communities of Practice experience successes and failures, chaos and order, harmony and conflict (Senge, et al., 2000; Wheatley, 2001; Oakes, Lipton, Anderson, & Stillman, 2016). Engagement is a process driven by values and active learning, which guides instruction. Practice and community unite when people are engaged in actions and relationships.

Investigating Learning and Teaching

Learning and teaching are linked through intentional instruction that guides learners. Effective teaching provides resources and opportunities for meaningful participation in the context of learning.

Constructivism, a theory about knowledge and learning, emerges as a foundation for understanding the teaching and learning process (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Dewey, 1997, 1938;

Girod, 2002; von Glasserfield, 1996; Oakes, Lipton, Anderson, & Stillman, 2016). Investigating is the study of conditions necessary for learning and teaching (Dewey, 1997, 1916). Educators provide learning environments where learners search for meaning, appreciate uncertainty, and inquire responsibly. Collectively, educators and learners support socio-cultural interactions, cooperative learning, and interdisciplinary curricula.

Educators create opportunities for learners to understand relationships between learning and teaching. Inclusive Communities of Practice are formed to engage learners in the teaching and learning process through collaboration, culturally responsive practices, assessment, and reflection.

The Seven Core Values

To accomplish the mission of the School of Education at Southwest Minnesota State University, *Inclusive Communities of Practice Investigating Learning and Teaching* include the core values of (1) inquiry, (2) human diversity, (3) socio-cultural interactions, (4) learning environments, (5) belief, value, and knowledge structures, (6) democracy, and (7) leadership.

Inquiry involves the use of research and reflective processes for learning. Affirming human diversity helps to support Inclusive Communities of Practice. Socio-cultural interaction requires understanding and applying cultural and social learning theories in context. Positive learning environments nurture and enhance learning. Belief, value, and knowledge structures guide learners to organize and construct meaning, which informs their practice and promotes democracy. Leadership involves engaged, collaborative learning opportunities in which all members share responsibility. These core values are reflected in our professional dispositions in the School of Education.

The Conceptual Framework Model

The Conceptual Framework is illustrated by a modified Yin Yang model. This model illustrates balance among factors that reflect natural parts of the dynamic learning process in *Inclusive Communities of Practice Investigating Learning and Teaching.* In the colored model, tan represents the diversity of communities with green illustrating growth through scholarship and practice, and the continual movement of the professional education process.

Concluding Statement

Under the guidance and support of the School of Education, candidates form connections using the Inclusive Communities of Practice Investigating Learning and Teaching, the Seven Core Values, and the Conceptual Framework Model to become effective practitioners.

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