MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT of CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, and SPECIAL EDUCATION
COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Prefix and Number: EDS 8663

Course Title: Improving Instruction in Secondary Schools

Credit Hours: Three (3) semester hours

Type of Course: Lecture

Catalogue Description: Three hours lecture. An investigation into the application of classroom-based inquiry, exploration, and action research as means of improving teaching and learning in secondary schools. Field-based.

College of Education Conceptual Framework:

The faculty in the College of Education at Mississippi State University are committed to assuring the success of students and graduates by providing superior learning opportunities that are continually improved as society, schools, and technology change. The organizing theme for the conceptual framework for the College of Education at Mississippi State University is educational professionals - dedicated to continual improvement of all students’ educational experiences. The beliefs that guide program development are as follows:

1. **KNOWLEDGE** - Educational professionals must have a deep understanding of the organizing concepts, processes, and attitudes that comprise their chosen disciplinary knowledge base, the pedagogical knowledge base, and the pedagogical content knowledge base. They must also know how to complement these knowledge bases with the appropriate use of technology.

2. **COLLABORATION** - Educational professionals must continually seek opportunities to work together, learn from one another, forge partnerships, and assume positions of responsibility.

3. **REFLECTION** - Educational professionals must be willing to assess their own strengths and weaknesses through reflection. They must also possess the skills, behaviors, and attitudes necessary to learn, change, and grow as life-long learners.

4. **PRACTICE** - Educational professionals must have a rich repertoire of research-based strategies for instruction, assessment, and the use of technologies. They must be able to focus
that array of skills on promoting authentic learning by all students or clients, while exhibiting an appreciation and commitment to the value and role of diversity.

Course Objectives:

1. To develop an appreciation of the need for continual development in the areas of effective instruction and efficient learning. (CFPO #5; NBPTS #1, 3, 4)
2. To increase knowledge in research findings related to secondary school instruction. (CFPO #8; NBPTS #4)
3. To demonstrate an awareness of the role of classroom teachers in developing solutions to problems related to teaching and learning. (CFPO #12; NBPTS #1, 3, 4)
4. To investigate the purposes and procedures associated with action research. (CFPO #8, 12; NBPTS #4, 5)
5. To identify an area of focus in teaching and learning in secondary classrooms and to design an action research project to address the problem. (CFPO #1, 8, 12; NBPTS #1, 3, 4)
6. To contribute to the body of knowledge of secondary school instruction through the application of action research in the classroom. (CFPO #1, 8; NBPTS #1, 3, 4)
7. To increase professional knowledge, skills, and perspectives pertinent to secondary school instruction. (CFPO #3, 5, 12; NBPTS #1, 3, 4)

Topics to Be Covered:

1) Improving Teaching and Learning (4 hours)
   a) Characteristics of Effective Teachers
   b) Critical Features of High Quality Instruction
2) What the Research Says About Secondary School Instruction (4 hours)
   a) Effective Schools Research
   b) Approaches to Academic Excellence
3) Classroom Teachers as Researchers (4 hours)
   a) Becoming a Reflective Practitioner
   b) Applying Evidence-Based Models of Instruction
4) Purposes of Action Research: Research to Practice (8 hours)
   a) Case Studies in the Teaching of Secondary School Students in Diverse Settings: Cases #1-4
      i) Case Studies in the Diversity of Secondary School Students and How They Learn: #1-4
5) Conducting an Action Research Project (10 hours)
   a) Identifying an Area of Focus
   b) Selecting Problems Related to Teaching
   c) Selecting Problems Related to Learning
   d) Defining the Parameters of the Project
   e) Designing the Project
   f) Attending to Legal Concerns
   g) Attending to Ethical Concerns
h) Attending to Logistical Matters
i) Collecting the Data
j) Making Sense of the Data
6) Application of Action Research Findings (10 hours)
a) Determining the Theoretical Implications of the Findings
   i) Theory to Research, Research to Theory
   ii) Supporting Conventional Theory
   iii) Challenging Conventional Theory
   iv) Developing New Theory
b) Collaboration and Sharing
   i) Presenting Research Findings
   ii) Publishing Research Findings
   iii) Adding to the Body of Knowledge
   iv) Using Action Research to Improve Instruction
7) Action Research as a Means to Becoming a Reflective Practitioner (5 hours)
a) Changing How Teachers Think About Teaching and Learning
b) Changing How Teachers Teach

Required Texts:


Pearson Education, Inc.


Methods of Instruction:

Lecture, small and large group discussion, inquiry, discovery, cooperative activities, independent
research, and problem-based learning.

Suggested Student Activities:

1. Each student will thoughtfully consider and explore in depth through seminar-style and
deliberative discussions theories, research findings, and application models of action
research as they apply to teaching and learning in secondary classrooms.
2. Each student will critique both verbally and in writing one academic journal article (or
other approved reading selection) per topic considered during each seminar/deliberative
discussion.
3. Each student will design and conduct an action research project addressing a problem related to teaching and learning in secondary schools. (Project to be approved by the professor.)

4. Each student will prepare and deliver to the class a multi-media presentation on the design of the action research project conducted, the findings of the project, and plans for dissemination and application of the project’s findings.

5. Each student will prepare a position paper on the importance of becoming a reflective secondary school practitioner.

6. Each student will participate in a variety of non-graded activities, including but not limited to the following: (a) active participation in classroom discussions and debates, (b) regular monitoring of the class listserv and participation in discussion threads, and (c) examination of related current issues in secondary education.

Honor Code:

Mississippi State University has an approved Honor Code that applies to all students. The code is as follows:

“As a Mississippi State University student I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. Students will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code. For additional information visit: http://students.msstate.edu/honorcode

Technology:

Technology will be used in both the delivery of the course content and through course requirements completed by students. Delivery of course content will use PowerPoint presentations, materials on the Internet and myCourses. All course assignments will be completed using appropriate software.

Diversity:

Student will examine materials for appropriateness to use with diverse learners.

Disabilities:

In accordance with section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Mississippi State University reasonably accommodates students who
demonstrate, through appropriate documentation, a qualified disability. The Department of Student Support Services (SSS) is the designated unit on campus that assists students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability. For additional information contact SSS at 662-325-3335

Field Component:

All students are responsible for completing an action research project. This involves having access to a classroom in which they teach or have administrative support for conducting an investigation of effective teaching practices as part of a class project. If students choose to use this project in the production of generalizable knowledge they are expected to follow all human subjects research protocols, and have IRB approval.

Evaluation of Student Progress:

Each student’s progress will be evaluated through the quality of written and oral class assignments, class participation, and performance on mid- and end-of-course examinations.

Grade Evaluation:

Article Critiques and Position Paper 250 points = 25%
Mid-Term Exam: Literature review & research design 250 points = 25%
Multi-media presentation and position paper 250 points = 25%
Final examination: Manuscript on action research study 250 points = 25%

Grading Scale:

A = 93 & above
B = 86 – 92
C = 79 – 85
D = 72 – 78
F = below 72

Bibliography:


Trumbull, E., Rothstein-Fisch, C., Greenfield, P. M., & Quiroz, B. (2001). *Bridging cultures*


