4. SLO: EDUCATIONAL AWARENESS

Class: SED 610
Professor: Ken Berry
Assignment: Weekly Readings & Postings on WebCT

Every week Dr. Berry posted articles for us to read pertaining to issues related to science, and past, present, and future issues pertaining to education. He provided questions that were designed to direct our attention to the major points of the articles. What impressed me the most about these assignments was what I didn’t know! I have been a science teacher for over twenty years and I was unaware of many of the issues and topics the authors addressed in these articles. For this SLO topic I will not focus on one particular assignment, rather the selection of articles that Dr. Berry chose and how they stimulated discussion and debate in the class.

One of the first articles we read was a transcript from a conference given by Professor Lee Shulman in which he discussed “signature pedagogies.” He contrasted the pedagogies of Law, Medicine, Engineering and the Clergy and suggested that teacher education could benefit from examining these other pedagogies. Shulman’s focus was on the establishment of apprenticeships for the formation of the professional. He suggested that three apprenticeships were necessary for the proper formation of any professional, including teachers: “Cognitive apprenticeship wherein one learns to think like a professional. (2) a practical apprenticeship where one learns to perform like a
professional and (3) a moral apprenticeship where one learns to think and act in a responsible and ethical manner that integrates across all three domains.”

A Historical Perspective, a chapter from a book on the recent history of American education by Ravitch is a must to put the standards reform movement in perspective. Unless, one is aware of the history of the standards movement (as I was) one is likely to think that this is a new diabolical plan foisted upon us by politicians—but its history goes further back and it is perhaps (I hate to admit it) less sinister than I originally thought. Much of the standardization happened simply as particular texts became widely used. However, the driving force for the initial wave of standardizations was the need for preparatory schools to have a uniform curriculum in order to prepare students for college entrance. These somewhat unorganized efforts were later followed by the “Committee of Ten,” the CRSE, the launch of Sputnik, the egalitarianism of the 60’s and 70’s, the Back-to-Basic movement of the 80’s, and the standards movement pioneered by the California Superintendent of Education, Bill Honig. The goal of the standards movement is a lofty one—to provide a rigorous education for all. Unfortunately, many of us feel like the GI’s storming the beaches of Normandy while the reformers are plotting their strategies in the safe bunkers of state legislatures and universities!

Another fascinating article was by Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat*. The caveat to all of the reforms that education is trying to issue in is that they may be out of date by the time we get them established. The rate at which globalization is occurring is so dizzying that with in a few short years the entire world’s economy will be transformed and we need to prepare students for it. Our schools are too often preparing students for jobs that will no longer exist. Students will need to become critical users of information
as well as adaptable to a rapidly changing world that is flattening with respect to knowledge and opportunity.

Another interesting article Dr. Berry had us read discussed the change in pedagogy that resulted from the shift from the behavioral to a cognitive psychological approach. Ravitch, the author of the article, stated that this was a shift away from studying the results of learning to how students learn. The behavioral approach focused on reinforcement and reward and when this was thrown out by the cognitive psychologists they also threw out much of the incentives that motivated students to learn. Now, with the evolving economy, business men and women are encouraging educators to go back to the ideas of reward: make students recognize the value of their education. They recommend that employers request transcripts from high schools for students seeking employment right out of college.

The articles discussed above, as well as others not mentioned here, I found informative. They certainly made me more aware of educational issues and how they impact the day-to-day lives of teachers and students in school.