

Investigating the Concerns of Preservice Secondary Mathematics Teachers Through Critical Incident Reflective Journals

Joanne E. Goodell
Cleveland State University
<j.goodell@csuohio.edu>

In this paper, I report the results of a three-year study into my own teaching of preservice secondary mathematics teachers in a combined 15-week methods and practicum course (60 class contact hours and 180 hours field placement). I have two main goals for my students. First is to develop their understanding of the art of “teaching for understanding”. Second is to develop their ability to think reflectively. One activity completed each week is the reporting and writing of a critical incident reflective journal. At the start of each weekly methods class, groups of three or four students report their critical incidents to each other, then choose one incident to report to the whole class. They submit a written report of ten critical incidents for grading. I have collected these journals for three years, and have 34 journals, with over 320 incidents reported. I have analysed the journals and found that the issues raised by students focus on four main areas: teaching and classroom management; student factors such as pre-requisite knowledge, understanding, resistance and motivation; issues concerning relationships with colleagues, students and parents; and school organizational issues such policies and access to resources. Through this Round Table presentation, I would like to solicit collaborators to undertake similar activities with their preservice teachers, so that we could combine our data and broaden the applicability of our findings across a wider range of contexts. The ultimate goal of my investigation is to improve the course to better meet the needs of my students.