Professors:
Betsy DeMulder (703) 993-8326
Bull Run Hall 228C
Office hours by appointment edemulde@gmu.edu

Elavie Ndura-Ouédraogo (703) 993-9424
Bull Run Hall 224
Office hours by appointment endura@gmu.edu

Stacia Stribling (703) 993-4337
Bull Run Hall 225A
Office hours by appointment sslawins@gmu.edu

Monimalika Day (703) 993-8164
Bull Run Hall 225B
Office hours by appointment mday3@gmu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Prerequisites: Admission to the Master’s in New Professional Studies program; MNPE 704 Research Methods

Catalog Description: Concurrent with other courses, student teams refine research topics and develop projects to investigate those topics. Projects involve children as partners rather than subjects in research. Product is substantial piece of work submitted with plan for dissemination in school community.

Concurrent with other courses, your team will identify and refine a research question and develop an action project to gain a deeper understanding of an important concern in your classrooms and school(s). The design of the work-plan will contain a detailed strategy involving children and other members of the school community as partners rather than as subjects in research. You will share your project in three written memos (the first and second memos will be written individually and the third will be written as a team collaborative report).

The second year research component of the IET program involves conducting a collaborative teacher research project with your teammates that includes an effort to go beyond your individual classrooms to initiate a discourse in your school community that could lead to more meaningful interactions and dialogue that may result in some type of school change. You will focus on the work needed at each step of the process – identifying a research question to address, reviewing
the literature, exploring and implementing new pedagogical strategies (including strategies to move the research beyond your individual classrooms to your school community), collecting and analyzing your data, and communicating what you learn. You will also consider the theoretical underpinnings of research, such as different styles of inquiry found in the literature and ways of communicating the results of that inquiry.

IET’s research emphasis is grounded in the idea that teacher research can be a productive part of the practice of teaching as a source of problem-solving, ongoing inquiry, revitalization, and continuous improvement. As such, the work is integrated with your classroom practice as well as with other components of the IET program. The collaborative research this year builds on your experience of conducting individual research studies in the first-year of the master’s program (Research Methods, MNPS 704/EDUC 597), and it is interwoven with other work done in the second year. Your team is encouraged to construct a collaborative research project grounded and supported by your experience and by reflection and discussion with colleagues, advisors, and other members of your school community. While your reading, reflection, discussion and other work in the program will be invaluable in the research process, you will also benefit from drawing on your research experience as we continue to study issues of reflective practice, language and culture, and professional development this year.

The collaborative research approach is also based on the idea that teacher research is one means by which teachers gain agency and voice in the education community. In the tradition of action research, teachers engage in studies that describe reality as participants see it, reflect on it, and derive theories and learning applicable to concrete situations through a framework of critical pedagogy. In addition, teachers are encouraged to take on leadership roles within their schools by capitalizing on multiple perspectives and energies of students, colleagues, administrators, staff, and/or parents, working toward more meaningful interactions and dialogue within the school, and potentially facilitating some needed school change. As part of a commitment to sharing knowledge and experience, research teams share their work with each other and with their school community, and contribute their final Collaborative Research Collection to IET’s library of teacher-research documents. Teacher-researchers are also encouraged to find other opportunities to share what they learn.

The research approach in the second year continues to be a very "hands-on" experience. While we will explore and discuss research methods in class, much of the process of planning the research design, analyzing and interpreting data, and rethinking the question and approach will be done in team meetings where members share their work with teammates and with the faculty advisor in a context where critical dialogue shapes next steps. Issues of validity will also be emphasized throughout the research process, considering whether the research is generative, persuasive, evocative, trustworthy, useful, ethical, reflexive, and triangulated among various methods and perspectives.

A Moral Framework in Teacher Research

Education/teaching is directly concerned with human betterment. It is therefore a moral business. (Sockett 90)
Professional expertise has to be captured in a moral language of personal attribution, that is, professional virtue. These human qualities (virtues such as fairness, honesty, courage, care, and practical wisdom) are integral to the individual attributes, competencies, and capabilities the teacher (in his or her role) possesses, because we can understand ourselves in our roles through these concepts of virtue. These virtues are necessary qualities in teaching for the effective exercise of the role. They are also the content of teaching and have to be learned or acquired by students. (Sockett 91)

Your research should be framed by moral purposes and upon moral truths. We ask you to reflect on and explicitly articulate your moral purposes as you brainstorm, revise, negotiate, and implement research in your classrooms. In what ways will your research better the prospects and lives of your students? How will you promote courage? How will you show courage? How will you develop trust in your relationships with your students? How will you show caring toward students and your teammates? How will you foster caring among your students? Will your research relate to your students honestly? How will this affect trust? What practical wisdom will you show toward your students? What practical wisdom will you elicit from your students as they relate to their classmates?

**Your Life as a Researcher**

Remember that researchers draw inspiration from many different kinds of experiences. As you begin to investigate your collaborative research question, be attuned to the way sources in popular culture can help to inform your thinking and understanding. Remember how useful and insightful it was to use the fictional characters – in the book *The Secret Life of Bees*, and the films *Freedom Writers* and *Crash* – as the basis for exploring important educational issues. As you continue your research, keep up the connection with sources in popular culture that you experience within your everyday life.

For example, when you see a movie or TV show, read a novel, hear a song on the radio, or experience other imaginative works that deal with teaching and learning, ask yourself “Is there something here that connects to my research?” If you are making a connection, capture your thoughts in your journal, share your thoughts with team members, or post a paragraph or two on WebCT. Keep yourself open to works of fiction and works of art that will engage your imagination and emotions and possibly lead you to new ideas and fresh perspectives that can ultimately enrich your research.

**NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY**

This course includes a variety of learning activities: discussions in seminar format, text-based/multi-media presentation of course materials, experiential learning activities including teacher action research, interactive assignments, cooperative learning group activities, online discussions and activities, and lecture.
LEARNER OUTCOMES

The goals of this course are:
- To develop as researchers and reflective practitioners,
- To plan, carry out, write, and present a classroom research project,
- To frame research inquiries around moral purposes and on moral truths, and
- To develop a critical perspective on issues related to teaching and learning.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

IET faculty have developed a set of assumptions about teaching and learning that are spelled out in our Beliefs and Principles in IET Practice document. One of the central assumptions relates to the importance of school-based inquiry. The Beliefs are stated as follows:

- The needs of students and the potential and limits for school change become more visible when teachers study education in the context in which they work.

- When school is a naturalistic base for teacher’s inquiry and research, problems in teaching or curriculum are not idealized, but grounded in the complexity and difficulty in which teachers present themselves in schools.

- Teachers appear more enterprising and autonomous in the conduct of school-based inquiry, providing an opportunity for students to see teachers, and to see themselves, as people who construct knowledge and critique knowledge.

- When teachers’ inquiry and research projects are based in their own practices, they are more likely to lead to action.

This course fits the mission of the Graduate School of Education, which is committed to:

- Developing reflective professionals who are leaders in research and practice,
- Expanding and refining the knowledge base for teaching and learning,
- Transforming higher education, schools, and other organizations through applied research, teaching, and collaboration, and
- Understanding and modeling democratic values and social justice.

By helping teachers to do research based in their own classrooms and schools, this course also supports the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards propositions 1, 4, and 5:

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning,
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and
- Teachers are members of learning communities.
REQUIRED TEXTS
(All of the readings for the second year are listed in each of the second-year syllabi.)


Additional readings will be distributed throughout the semester.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Readings are carefully chosen to stimulate thinking and dialogue. Some are chosen to challenge your thinking about particular issues. Others are chosen to dialogue with those challenges. Our hope and intention is that you will engage in dialogue around these readings and others you may
want to bring to our deliberations. These readings will not contain answers; rather they are
designed to raise questions. Any “answers” we come to will arise out of our deliberations as we
compare ideas in books with classroom experience and practical wisdom. Evidence of
incorporation of critical interaction with readings into on-line discussions, team meetings,
journals, and papers is the essential element of documenting that one has engaged with the
readings.

**Attendance and Participation in Class Activities** are essential. This program is built on the
assumption that teachers have much to learn from each other as they bring their experience and
practical wisdom to bear on new learning contexts and new problems. Each class day is
equivalent to approximately three weeks of class in a traditional program. It is important to be
on time and to be engaged. Coming late or leaving early undermines the possibility of learning
from your peers and helping your peers learn. Research on learning suggests that students learn
best when they are actively engaged with the material to be learned, when they have
opportunities to operate collectively and collaboratively, when faculty address students’ various
learning styles and multiple intelligences, and when faculty help students see why their subjects
and assignments are relevant and important. We plan class days to maximize the likelihood that
you will encounter ideas in a variety of ways. We also build a lot of collaborative activity into
our class days. When you are absent or not engaged, you deprive yourself and others of the
chance to construct knowledge together. *(See the Attendance Policy on pg. 5 in the Program
Overview section of the IET Notebook.)*

**Class Day Reflective Feedback** offers you an opportunity to revisit and reflect on your
experience of each class day. It also gives the faculty valuable information about how you
experience the curriculum and where you are in your thinking.

**Teaming** provides the context for intellectual community, critical dialogue, social support, and
professional transformation. Meeting weekly as a team is necessary for achieving the aims of the
program and is a requirement of the program. Within the team, you have the opportunity to
explore your own thinking, to probe the thinking of others, and to construct positions on crucial
aspects of teaching and learning. We recruit teachers in teams from schools to combat the
isolation and alienation of many schools. We hope that teams will become the nucleus of a
learning community within your schools and will provide social and intellectual support for the
personal and professional transformation the program seeks to foster. Team meetings should be
used to discuss all aspects of the research process and progress. These regular team meetings
allow teams to develop a supportive collaborative research space to engage in critical dialogue
over research and teaching issues, readings, and assignments. We ask teams to maintain a team
log that will document participation in this aspect of reflective practice.

**Reflective Journals** are a requirement of the IET program and are designed to help you think
about your experience as a moral professional. Continue to maintain a journal throughout the
year. You are to write in your journals at least twice a week. When your school is in session,
one of the entries each week should be field notes from your classroom or school. For the other
entry, sometimes we may assign a specific topic but usually you will choose your reflection
topic. You must write at least one journal entry reflecting on each required reading (except those
assigned to be read during class days), reflecting on the reading’s impact on your
thinking/learning and teaching. You should also use your journal to reflect on your research: in addition to reflecting on observations of your students and on your practice, you should use the journal to record questions, puzzlements, ideas, and insights. Later, reflect on patterns you are seeing in your data, how what you are finding relates to the work of others, and how your question and/or data collection strategies are changing as your research progresses. Make it a habit to come to team meetings prepared to read selected journal entries with your teammates, particularly about the readings and research process. Twice a year, you will be asked to turn in your journals with selected entries copied to be handed in to your advisor. These entries will demonstrate your attempt to reflect deeply about a variety of issues and your own professional practice. This year, journals will be handed in on the December class day and again in May, 2010.

The Spring Blackboard Research Discussion will offer an opportunity to share questions, dilemmas, data, and insights related to your collaborative research. Details will be distributed.

The Second Year Collaborative Action Research Project will be a year-long collaborative project that continues to build your skills as a critically reflective practitioner and teacher researcher. You will document your collaborative research experience this year in the writing of three research memos, the first two will be written as individual reports and the team will write the third memo collaboratively. Research Memo #1 is due in the Blackboard Drop Box by November 1st, 2009 and will include your research topic/question, a review of the literature, ideas for initial actions you plan to take in your classroom, and an analysis of the ways that the collaborative, problem-posing dialogue process is driving the research. Research Memo #2 due on February 20th, 2010, will focus on data collection, data analysis and the continuing collaborative process. Research Memo #3, written collaboratively as a team, is due on May 8th, 2010 and will focus on continuing data collection, data analysis, and collaborative processes, and will highlight what you learned as a collaborative research team. A draft of your Research Memo #3 will be due on the April class day (April 17th) when you will pair-share with another team, giving and receiving feedback so as to revise and refine Research Memo #3 for submission to your advisor on the May class day.

School Presentation of Team Research & Reflection. You will need to arrange with your principal to share your collaborative research with school personnel sometime between April and June, 2010. This is a graded assignment that falls under the Teaching & Learning (IETT 753) course. (Guidelines will be distributed later.)

IET Presentation of Team Research. You will share your collaborative research in June, 2010 during the final summer session. This is a graded assignment that falls under the Teaching & Learning (IETT 753) course. (Guidelines will be distributed later.)
Summary of Grades

Attendance & Participation (8 class days)  20 points
Blackboard class day feedback (8 class days)  10 points
Journals – Winter/Spring          10 points
Spring Blackboard discussion      20 points
Research Memo #2                  20 points
Research Memo #3                  20 points

TOTAL                      100 points

Grade Distribution for Each Course

95-100      A
90-94       A-
85-89       B
80-84       B-
75-79       C
74 and below F

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS:  All students must abide by the following:

Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See http://gse.gmu.edu/facultystaffres/profdisp.htm for a listing of these dispositions.

Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12 for the full honor code.

Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/policy/newpolicy/1301gen.html.
Click on responsible Use of Computing Policy at the bottom of the screen.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see your adviser and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.