

THE MODE OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICE OF FCS TEACHER-LEADERS AND NON-TEACHER-LEADERS

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The constructs of practical reasoning, practical problem solving and critical thinking, and related interpersonal, management, citizenship, and leadership processes are complex and require much reflective thinking. When presented with a curriculum based on these constructs, will teachers be willing to implement this complex perspective? The purpose of this study was to determine Ohio Work and Family Life secondary teachers' dominant mode of professional practice when implementing a refined critical science-based curriculum: Technical-Rational Mode, Reflective-Ethical Mode, or Process-Oriented Mode. The target population for this study included 1,013 secondary teachers in Ohio, teaching one or more of the six core Work and Family Life courses. A random sample of 450 teachers and 45 Teacher-Leaders Institute participants were mail-surveyed; 297 (60% of sample) useable questionnaires were returned.

The majority of Ohio Work and Family Life secondary teachers' dominant mode of professional practice was the Process-Oriented mode with over two-thirds ($n = 204$, 68.7%) of the teachers using that mode of practice. An ad hoc analysis of the items on the FCSCI scale was conducted to further clarify the teaching practices of Ohio Work and Family Life teachers. A majority of the teachers indicated that they are emphasizing critical thinking tools in their classrooms. The majority (73.1%) is also probing ethical thinking of their students. Although Reflective-Ethical practice was not their dominant mode, the teachers appear to be incorporating the major point of the curriculum perspective. Another positive finding was that the teachers claimed to spend little time teaching their students the "one right way" to solve problems. Examining alternative ways to solve problems is a foundational point of Reflective-Ethical practice and the practical problem-based curriculum. Efforts to move teachers to the Reflective-Ethical mode of professional practice need to continue. Professional development experiences should incorporate what is known about successful professional development. Results of the study will be useful for encouraging teachers to develop Reflective-Ethical and Process-Oriented teaching practices.

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