Assignment for the Teachership Academy **February 18, 2010**
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Action Research Project Proposal

TEACHERSHIP ACADEMY

Topic:

Student Problems in Thinking Conceptually Addressed.

A major problem for teaching philosophy in American Colleges and Universities lies in the fact that there are major differences, regionally and even internationally, in determining what philosophy is, as well as what it should be. Many want it to be a hand maiden to science in a similar way that it was a handmaiden to religion during the medieval era. According to Giles Deleuze in the widely known work, "What is Philosophy?" philosophy is a means of discovering new concepts; whereas science is a method of proving or disproving accepted concepts. Then, the arts deal with the affective aspect of cognition, often marginalized by considering reason as pure and disembodied.

I have come to see that many of the students have trouble with the discipline philosophy because they have major difficulty with conceptualizing. This is probably a function of greater difficulty in reading itself, but that problem is beyond our scope here. Our students are coming to philosophy for the first time and have no idea what to expect. Seemingly, they have only memorized in history and such other disciplines and have little experience in analyzing situations and applying critical thinking skills.

While depending upon multiple choice and true/false testing methods, I have not been able to see the students' problem in conceptualizing. A two-pronged approach is to be tested in dealing with this problem. First, more time will be spent explaining what it means to conceptualize, using lots of

examples for guidance. Then, practice within class room activities will help to reinforce this cognitive skill. Class discussion will be utilized and a questioning attitude thus encouraged. With short pop quizzes, the students will gain more experience in conceptualizing by applying the technique to specific concepts such as “time,” “democracy,” “progress,” etc.

I will be compiling a list of sample concepts, and, in fact, I am considering a project of writing a book on this topic in partnership with Joe Old.

Postulates:

1. Visualization of the problem and how to stimulate participation.
2. Assessment of plan of action and method of determination.
3. Set into action active use of logical formulation, using conceptual approach to critical thinking.
4. Assessment of effective change in critical thinking usage.
5. Continued incorporation of conceptual understanding.