

2015-05-12

Fostering Deeper Learning through Promoting Reflective Practice and Critical Thinking in Undergraduate Students

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<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/50579>

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2015 University of Calgary Conference on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching
May 12, 2015
Oral Presentation

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Introduction:

Shuffle Walk Statements

Is it Critical Thinking or Reflective Practice?

- You ask your students to question themselves: What else do they need to know? What other information are you going to look up? Why? (CT)
- You teach your students to consider 'so what' and 'now what' in relation to an experience they have had. (RP)
- Students do a presentation to their peers on a topic they have investigated or experienced and invite the other students to ask questions about the experience. (CT)
- You have a set of questions in mind when you are asking the student to talk about what they are planning to do in an upcoming practice situation. (CT)
- You debrief with your students about the highs and lows of their experiences. (RP)
- You require your students to submit journals on a regular basis in relation to their learning and their experiences. (RP)

Additional Considerations about Definitions

Critical thinking in nursing practice includes the cognitive skills of analyzing, applying standards, discriminating, information seeking, logical reasoning, predicting, and transforming knowledge. Component subskills of critical thinking incorporate 10 habits of the mind one of which is reflection defined as intentional contemplation on experiences and the accompanying thoughts and feelings in order to enhance self-discovery and personal meaning for purposes of deeper understanding and self-evaluation (Scheffer & Rubenfeld, 2000)

[Note: Scheffer's and Rubenfeld's 2000 international consensus definition of critical thinking incorporates 10 habits of mind which include: *confidence* in reasoning abilities, *contextual perspective* considering the whole situation; *creativity* involving intellectual inventiveness to imagine alternatives; *flexibility* to adapt, modify or change thoughts, ideas and behaviours; *inquisitiveness* to seek knowledge and understanding through observations and questioning to explore alternative; *intellectual integrity* by seeking the truth through sincere, honest processes even if they are contrary to one's beliefs/assumptions; *intuition* involving a sense of knowing without conscious use of reason; *open-mindedness* meaning receptiveness to divergent views and sensitive to one's biases; *perseverance* with determination to overcome obstacles; and *reflection*]

Reflection has often been cited as a freestanding strategy for developing critical thinking skills (Emerson, 2007)

Metacognition (thinking about one's thinking) is practiced through reflection and this hones and refines critical thinking (Emerson, 2007)

Early nursing definitions of critical thinking focused on the intellectual cognitive activity; affective components were added later but are usually less emphasized and even ignored by some (Scheffer & Rubenfeld, 2000)

Critical thinking is perceived by some to be the same as or at least closely related to the nursing process (Tanner, 2000; Staib, 2003; Walthew, 2004)

Reflective practice is a process of learning and development through examining one's own practice, including experiences, thoughts, feelings, actions and knowledge – reviewing our own values, challenging our assumptions and considering the broader social, political, and professional issues that are relevant to practice (Atkins & Schutz, 2013)

Differences and Similarities in Definitions of Reflection and Reflective Practice

Similarities – Exploration of experience; the analysis of feelings as well as oneself to inform learning; involves a changed perspective and action (the influence of critical theory)

Differences – A differing emphasis on the importance/significance of feelings and emotion; not all explicitly recognize the inclusion of change; the reflective process varies with some identifying more of a solitary process and others stressing the importance of having someone to

Definition Quotes- Literature

Based on the literature, it appears that *critical thinking* is a more objective, linear exercise of rationality and problem solving, whereas *reflective practice* takes this further by encompassing a more subjective, non-linear process of self-examination in order to improve one's actions.

Ruth-Sahd (2003) differentiated *reflective practice* from *critical thinking* by stating that the former is “an imaginative, nonlinear, human act in which educators and students recapture their experience, think about it, and evaluate it” (p. 488).

Carroll et al. (2002) stated that *reflection* is a natural human thinking process that involves looking back to a situation while also projecting forward to the future. On the other hand, *critical thinking* can be defined as “the synthesis that occurs between knowledge, skills, and judgment” (Cirocco, 2007, p. 405).

While Carroll et al. (2002) noted that critical thinking is a sub-skill of *reflective practice*, Banning (2006) suggested that an essential feature or parameter of critical thinking is *reflection*.

Purvis (2009) noted that: "Critical thinking and reflective practice have some common features particularly in the areas of self-monitoring, self-evaluating, and self-reinforcing goal-directed behaviors; however, reflective practice takes critical thinking to a different level" (pp. 5-6).

Strategy Quotes- Study Participants

Critical Thinking

"If I was a novice nurse in the beginning, you're still growing in your critical thinking; you don't have that repertoire of years of wisdom and experience I think reading, like when you have a question, looking for articles, going back to your textbooks and reading up" (Interview 1 page 3)

"You assess their understanding of the situation and then ask questions to guide them to think critically through, rather than just giving an answer right away"

So I think its asking a lot of questions and walking in step with the students"
(Interview 1 page 5)

"They learn from one another during post-conference time, you know? So they say, okay, I didn't know much about Y, Y, or Z and they come back and present something very short to the group and then invite other students to ask questions about the experience" (interview 1 page 7)

Reflective practice & Critical Thinking

"Finding time within the term to have one-on-one conversations with students..."
(Interview 2 page 7)

"I do some prompting..." (interview 2 page 8)

"Case studies..." (Interview 2 page 9)

"Small group work can be extremely powerful. And if you're able to tteach your peers information then you have synthesized the information to a different level"
(interview 2 page 12)

Initial Findings

Strategies for Critical Thinking:

- Questioning students about their plans of care
- Use of case studies
- Small group work – teaching our peers
- Use of simulated scenarios

Strategies for Reflective Practice:

- Debriefing experiences in a group setting
- Journaling with written responses to stimulate further reflection
- Questioning the students about the meaning of their experiences
- Teaching students to ask “Why”, “So What”, and “Now What”.

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