

“What the What? Strategies for Critical Reflection and Assessment”

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Critical Reflection Strategies

Open-ended questioning techniques

Peter Pappas’s “Taxonomy of Student Reflection”

Educational consultant Pappas uses Bloom’s Taxonomy to create a “taxonomy of lower to higher order reflection” – a simple tool for formative assessment, too:

Bloom’s Remembering – retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from short- or long-term memory. Reflection: What did I do?

Bloom’s Understanding – constructing meaning from oral, written, or graphic messages. Reflection: What was important about what I did? Did I meet my goals?

Bloom’s Applying – carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing; extending the procedure to a new setting. Reflection: When did I do this before? Where could I use this again?

Bloom’s Analyzing – breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose. Reflection: Do I see any patterns or relationships in what I did?

Bloom’s Evaluating – making judgments based on criteria and standards. Reflection: How well did I do? What worked? What do I need to improve?

Bloom’s Creating – combining or reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure. Reflection: What should I do next? What’s my plan/my design?
www.peterpappas.com

Reflective Writing Activities

Letter-to-a-friend (plus references to a model – SOLO (below) – for assessing levels of complexity in a student’s understanding)

“...written by the student to a friend, imaginary or real, who is supposedly thinking of enrolling in the course in the following year. These letters are about a page in length and are written and assessed in a few minutes. The student should reflect on the unit and report on it as it affects them. Letters tend to be either multistructural or relational, occasionally extended abstract. Multistructural letters are simply lists of course content, a rehash of the course outline. Good responses provide integrated accounts of how the topics fit together and form a useful whole (relational), while the best describe a change in personal perspective as a result of studying the course (extended abstract). Letter-to-a-friend also provides a useful source of feedback to the teacher on aspects of the course. Like the concept map, letters supplement more fine-grained tasks with an overview of the course.”

(Trigwell and Prosser 1990 in Biggs and Tang 2007: 235)

Reflective Journal Activities

Group Activities – a reflective report submitted after a group project

The reflective report explains where and how one's contribution fits into the project as a whole, and explaining how one thinks he or she has achieved the learning outcomes through participation in the group project; provides a holistic assessment.

(Biggs and Tang 2007: 219)

Reflective Journal/Learning diary or log

The student records any incidents or thoughts that help him or her reflect on the content of the course or program...requires that one is very clear about what course learning outcomes the journals are meant to be addressing.

(Biggs and Tang 2007: 221)

Critical Incidents as the focus of a reflective journal or for use in a portfolio (can also be used for assessment purposes)

Asking students to keep records of critical incidents in their workplace experience (re internship, service-learning, practicum, etc.) and later to discuss their significance can be very powerful evidence of how well their knowledge is functioning (both a teaching and learning activity and an assessment task). They might explain why these incidents are critical, how they arose and what might be done about it. Gives rich information about how students (a) have interpreted what they've been taught and (b) can make use of the information.

(Biggs and Tang 2007: 219)

Classroom evaluation questionnaires

Questionnaires that ask students to evaluate their own learning experience and outcomes encourage reflective learning.

(Biggs and Tang 2007: 262)

In-class discussion or other speaking activities

"Freirian Fish Bowl: For many reasons, individuals may feel uncomfortable voicing their opinion in a group environment. One mechanism for gaining full-group participation is to have all participants write their respective responses to issues on a piece of paper (do not include names). The pieces of paper are then placed in a hat in the middle of a circle. For example, the facilitator asks that everyone explain (on paper) "why are there so many homeless people in this city?" Answers may range from, "people do not want work because they are lazy" to "there exists a government conspiracy and homeless funding is often misused." These are typical statements that are controversial but tend to not be voiced openly. Thus, the Freirian method gets all opinions down on paper. Once opinions have been recorded on paper and placed in a hat, pass the hat among the group. Everyone must respond with their interpretation of the written response and then voice their personal reaction to the paper."

http://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection_manual/activities.html

Critical Reflection and Assessment Strategies – a few suggestions

Chapter 8, "Techniques for Assessing Learner Attitudes, Values, and Self-Awareness," in Thomas Angelo and Patricia K. Cross's, *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*, Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Francisco, 1993. While Chapter 8 provides information about and instruction for thirteen separate CATS, numbers 33, 34, 35, and 36 deal, in particular, with assessing students' self-awareness as learners.

SOLO Taxonomy (Biggs and Collis 1982)

Pre-structural – student seems to have pieces of unconnected information, or does not know where to begin.

Unistructural – simple and obvious connections are made, but the significance is not grasped or is limited; surface understanding

Multistructural – a number of connections may be made, but their relationships to each other and the whole are missed; surface understanding

Relational – aspects are linked and integrated, and contribute to a deeper and more coherent understanding of the whole.

Extended Abstract – the new understanding at the relational level is rethought at another conceptual level, looked at in a new way, and used as the basis for prediction, generalization, reflection, or creation of new understanding.

(In www.pamhook.com)

Characteristics of environments that prompt and support reflective thinking

www.hawaii.edu/intirel/pols382/Reflective%Thinking%20-%20UH/reflection.html

- Provide enough wait-time for students to reflect when responding to inquiries
- Provide emotionally supportive environments in the classroom encouraging reevaluation of conclusions
- Provide reviews of the learning situation, what is known, what is not yet known, and what has been learned