Chapter 59
Critical Thinking, Critical Doing:
Instructional Routines for Critical, Embodied Thinking in Preservice Literacy Education Coursework

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ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines five instructional routines utilized by teacher educators to support the development of not only critical thinking but critical doing for future educators. The five routines—collaborative facilitation, behind-the-glass peer reviews, lesson play, virtual peer coaching, and rehearsals—are both described and expanded in a worked example using data from undergraduate coursework for pre-service teachers in literacy education. Individual routines foreground and background particular elements of the teaching process; however, all maintain an emphasis on critical thinking and doing as a core competency. Importantly, these instructional routines were found to be most effective when (1) preservice teachers are given opportunities to engage in multiple iterations of each routine and (2) preservice teacher doing is surrounded by substantial amounts of teacher educator feedback.

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking continues to be emphasized as an outcome of a college education, particularly as an essential life skill with value to the workforce (National Research Council, 2011). Faculty largely see the development of critical thinking as the primary goal of an undergraduate education (DeAngelo et al., 2009) though the future direction of teaching *for* critical thinking is at a crossroads. As part of their larger meta-analysis of studies of critical thinking in higher education, Huber and Kuncel (2016) found efforts shifting time and resources to teaching general domain critical thinking have plateaued in terms of student achievement but recognized unique characteristics of discipline-specific critical thinking, hypothesizing domain-specific critical thinking might be one way forward.

It is impossible, however, to establish ways forward without first delineating a basis for understanding critical thinking, a concept whose meaning, at times, possesses fuzzy semantic boundaries. In their summarization of popular definitions of critical thinking, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) identified several common cognitive attributes applied using this concept: identifying central issues and assumptions within an argument, recognizing important relationships, making inferences grounded in accurate readings of data, building conclusions from information or data, interpreting the warrant of those conclusions based on the data, evaluating evidence or authority, making self-corrections, and solving problems. Paul and Elder (2014) elaborate on this framing to include attitudes, dispositions, interests, and traits of mind as factors impacting one's ability to analyze and evaluate thinking for continuous improvement. Dispositions are a particularly interesting component of critical thinking, referring to the tendency or habit building of reactions in particular ways under consistently presented situations (Villegas, 2007). Such a position, Halpern (1998) writes, is composed of several factors:

- Willingness to engage and persist at a complex task
- Habitual use of plans and the suppression of impulsive activity
- Flexibility or open mindedness
- Willingness to abandon nonproductive strategies in an attempt to self-correct, and
- An awareness of the social realities that need to be overcome (p. 45).

Beyond analysis, self-regulation, and self-reflection, critical thinking encompasses affective components as well, particularly the ability to suspend judgement and be open-minded to foreign or contradictory ideas (Facione & Gittens, 2013). In this article, we expand these understandings of critical *thinking*, which has largely cerebral connotations, to encompass a range of well-informed, deliberate actions that teachers take with students: critical *doing*. Critical doing is marked by an action-oriented response to critical thinking.

CRITICAL THINKING/DOING IN PRACTICE-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION

Much like critical thinking, teacher education has often been framed as a cognitive endeavor, with a focus on the content knowledge of pre-service teachers (PSTs) as a way to ensure instructional quality in the classroom. This emphasis is reflected in the sheer number of exams specifically addressing content knowledge in English language arts, math, science, and social studies connected to teacher certification. While it would be foolhardy to argue that content is not important, the emphasis on content does not

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