

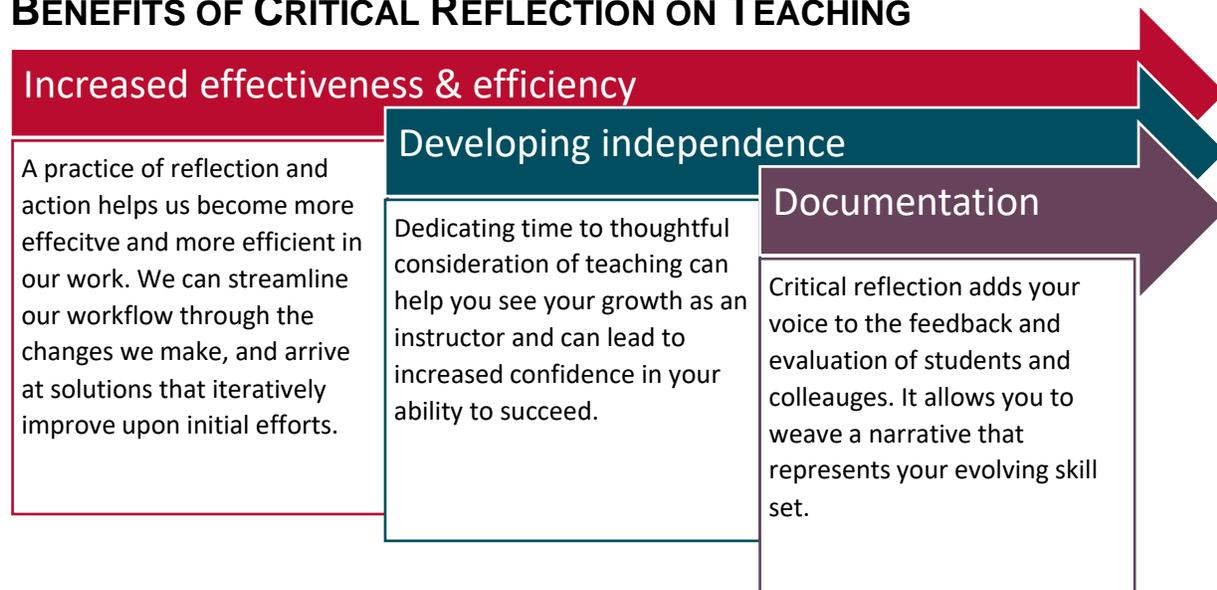


Often lost in the midst of conversations about the evaluation of teaching is the role of the individual practitioner, who plays a significant part in crafting her own narrative and creating her own path toward teaching effectiveness. Through critical reflection we can better understand our own experience as educators, leading to iterative and sustained development in our teaching practices. Without critical reflection we risk teaching on autopilot, failing to make changes when we should, and missing opportunities to build on our key successes.

A recurring reflective practice creates a feedback loop in academic development, contributing not only to enhanced teaching and learning but also to the nurturing of a rich scholarly community of teachers.

Sheffield & Felten, 2018

BENEFITS OF CRITICAL REFLECTION ON TEACHING



I often talk about radical openness because it became clear to me, after years in academic settings, that it was far too easy to become attached to and protective of one's viewpoint, and to rule out other perspectives. So much academic training encourages teachers to assume that they must be "right" at all times. Instead, I propose that teachers must be open at all times, and we must be willing to acknowledge what we do not know. A radical commitment to openness maintains the integrity of the critical thinking process and its central role in education.

hooks, 2010

ENGAGING IN CRITICAL REFLECTION

What happened?

Praxis is thinking about what and why you're going to do before you do it and then reflecting on what you did, how you did it, and how it turned out. (Monchinski, 2008)

Critical reflection begins with data – be it an experience with students, the execution of a course, introduction of a new teaching strategy, student performance on a test, feedback from a teaching mentor, and so on. Pick a starting point and run with it.

Why did it happen?

- What caused this to happen the way it did?
 - What experiences shape my understanding?
 - Where do my personal beliefs and values show up?
 - What assumptions or biases are embedded in my initial reaction?
 - What are other possible explanations?
 - What different scenarios might explain what's going on?
 - What blind spots might I still have?
 - What else is happening that might be related?
 - What assignments or assessments does it involve?
 - How does it relate to course learning objectives?
 - Have I already thought about this intentionally? What have I already tried and what were the results?
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How should I respond?

- What is the first possible solution that comes to mind?
 - What other options are there? How many different solutions can I come up with?
 - What are the possible implications of each option?
 - What are the risks and tradeoffs involved?
 - What are the pros and cons?
 - What are the consequences for my students? For my course?
 - Will some students be impacted more than others?
 - What kinds of demands on my own time, energy, and resources would it require?
 - What underlying messages would each option communicate – about the course goals or about my values as an instructor?
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What's the impact of my response?

- How will my choice affect other components of the course? What possible revisions to schedule or policy, lesson structure, mode of assessment, etc. will I need to consider to effectively implement it?
- Will this change affect other courses in a sequence or degree program?
- Will it be helpful or necessary to consult with colleagues before implementation?
- If I try something out during the semester, how will I communicate with students about the reasons for and goals of the idea or change?
- How will I ask for and receive input on how it went? From whom?
- When and how do I plan to reflect on the outcomes of my idea? At the end of the semester or right after the class session? Will I journal about the experience or make notes on my lessons?

How did it go?

- What went well and what did not go so well?
- What surprised me? What happened that I didn't expect?
- What things surfaced that I didn't think of before?
- How can I record what I've learned for future reference?
- What should I do next? [drop it...keep it...revise it...]

References & Further Reading

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