

THE SKILLS AND VALUES OF INQUIRY: REALISING CRITICAL THINKING IN PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

Critical thinking is the Cheshire cat of educational curricula, appearing everywhere half formed but disappearing on close inspection. One way around this problem is to focus on the relationship between three key components: cognitive skills, virtues or affective dispositions, and the values of inquiry. Cognitive skills are the things we do with knowledge, such as infer, categorise, analyse, synthesis and so on. Virtues are those things that are typical of critical thinkers, such as willingness to inquire, opens to new ideas, self-reflection, etc. The values of inquiry are those things applied during the process of inquiry, such as precision, clarity, plausibility, coherence and the like. Understanding what this means in a critical thinking pedagogy is vital for teachers, who will not be able to develop critical thinking in their students unless they are themselves critical thinkers.

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