

Critical Thinking Skills for Students: Curriculum and Practice in Higher Education

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Publisher: Unisa Press

Place: Pretoria

Year: 2024

ISBN: 978-1-77615-206-3

eISBN 978-1-77615-207-0

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2025/n33a12>

In *Critical Thinking Skills for Students: Curriculum and Practice in Higher Education*, Heather Goode provides a practice-oriented study of how critical thinking is conceptualised and enacted in South African higher education. Grounded in her doctoral research, Goode uses a qualitative case study to examine the interplay between curriculum design, assessment and professional teaching practices in higher education institutions. Her focus is placed on first-year students entering higher education in a context where unequal pre-university education increasingly demands for greater academic support for students and transformation of the curriculum.

Goode does not analyse critical thinking as a decontextualised skill or universal cognitive outcome; however, her analysis is situated within the lived experiences of South African university lecturers. Through in-depth interviews, Goode highlights how lecturers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds interpret and implement critical thinking outcomes in their classrooms. Their reflections, often shaped by collaborative communities of practice, reveal both the opportunities and constraints presented by institutional imperatives, such as standardised learning management systems and policy-aligned assessment frameworks.

A significant portion of Goode's book addresses how tools like Bloom's Taxonomy are used to design assessments and structure cognitive demands. While Goode recognises the value of such frameworks, the author also cautions that their application is neither uniform nor straightforward. Instead, she reveals how contextual factors such as disciplinary norms, institutional cultures and student demographics mediate the interpretation and efficacy of these standardised frameworks and systems. Particularly valuable is the book's focus on the first-year curriculum as a transformative space. Goode argues that early exposure to critical thinking, when scaffolded effectively, can set the foundation for long-term academic engagement. The author makes a strong case for professional development that is not merely compliance-driven, but transformative and embedded within institutional culture.

For history teachers and teacher education lecturers, particularly those concerned with democratic citizenship, epistemic justice and curriculum decolonisation, this book offers both theoretical and practical insights. A limitation of the book is that the case study is drawn from a private higher education institution. However, the findings succeed to resonate more broadly and suggest fruitful areas for further research. These studies may include comparative analyses across public and private institutions and a deeper engagement with indigenous knowledge systems.

In summary, Goode's book is a valuable and timely contribution to the scholarship on teaching and learning in higher education. It will be of particular interest to researchers, curriculum designers, lecturers and teachers who are committed to fostering critical thinking and inclusive pedagogical practices. While rooted in the South African post-apartheid context, the book's insights resonate broadly in a global educational landscape which is increasingly challenged by a resurgence of conservative ideologies. Goode's work, thus, offers both a locally grounded and globally relevant framework for advancing critical and transformative teaching in higher education.