

Title: Supporting critical thinking through purposeful classroom talk

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Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Explore the principles of dialogic teaching
- Make links between dialogic teaching and supporting critical thinking
- Apply dialogic teaching principles to classroom discourse
- Evaluate how they incorporate dialogic teaching principles in their teaching

Outline

This presentation will discuss preliminary findings of a SEDA funded project entitled *Developing and evaluating a dialogic pedagogy to support critical thinking*. The aim of the project is to provide a scheme of academic development activities through an existing community of practice (called CritTalk) which introduces teachers to dialogic pedagogy and develops their understanding, self-efficacy and skills as well as evaluating their experiences of using a Critical Thinking Skills Toolkit.

Previous to this study, one of the presenters had previously worked with staff and students to co-create 8 discipline specific Critical Thinking Skills Toolkits (Wason, 2016), designed to support the development of Facione's (1990) typology of critical thinking skills within existing curricula. However, observations and discussions with students and teachers suggested that the link between students' use of the toolkit and teachers' pedagogy around the toolkit was not always aligned with the aims of the Toolkit. There was also evidence of a lack of understanding amongst staff to develop teaching practices to support its use. Critical thinking is underpinned by the use of appropriate classroom discourse, however the lack of a common language about what critical thinking means between educators and students, as well as a lack of awareness of the key role of classroom talk could result in untapped potential of the CritTalk toolkit. Dialogic teaching (Alexander, 2020) supports a particular type of classroom discourse, one in which teachers and students use educational dialogue to develop students' critical thinking and oracy skills.

The project has thus far involved four CritTalk sessions where teachers from all disciplines are introduced to principles of dialogic teaching and with a particular focus on establishing supportive classrooms (both F2F and online) and using classroom talk (e.g. questioning) to promote critical thinking. Preliminary data has been gathered through session feedback and pre-session questionnaires. We will share this data with participants and discuss next steps. We will also invite conference participants to share their own experiences of teaching critical thinking and supporting educational classroom discourse.

Activities and Approximate Timings (*no more than 300 words*) **Total 40 mins**

1. Brief outline of research project – context, participants, motivation. [5 mins]
2. Presentation of key concepts and literature [5 mins]
3. Discussion with participants on the concepts of critical thinking and dialogic teaching – sharing experiences [10 mins]
4. Presentation of the outline of academic development activities [2 mins]
5. Activity to show the link between CritTalk toolkit and dialogic teaching [10 mins]
6. Presentation of preliminary data [3 mins]
7. Questions and comments [5 mins]

Preparation before the session

Read: <https://www.nie.edu.sg/docs/default-source/event-document/final-dialogic-teaching-essentials.pdf>

References and sources (*word count not applicable*)

Alexander, R. (2020). *A dialogic teaching companion*. Routledge

Facione, P.A. (1990) *Critical Thinking A statement of expert consensus for purposes of educational attainment and instruction*. American Philosophical Association

Wason, H. (2016) 'Embedding a Critical Thinking Framework for Undergraduate Business Students', in Remenyi, D. (Ed.) 2016 Innovation in the Teaching of Research Methodology Excellence Awards: An Anthology of Case Histories, Reading: Academic Conferences and Publishing International