

**The integration of critical reflection as a learning
strategy in the training of health science practitioners**

by

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa today a constant stream of demands characterise higher education. The global employment market expects graduating students to be flexible, adoptable and prepared to take responsibility for their own learning and their own continuous professional development. The pace of technological change in health sciences and the volume of available information highlight the need to develop students' critical reflective thinking.

A paradigm shift is required in health science education from one of providing instruction to one of promoting effective and lifelong learning. Educators in health sciences need to revisit, rethink and evaluate criteria for health practice.

The challenge of this research is to investigate the integration of critical reflection as a learning strategy in the outcomes of learning programmes within a transformative education approach; the integration of theory and practice through a reflective learning approach; the development and implementation of different

learning tools to facilitate effective learning; the importance of establishing an understanding of the link between the learning styles of students and critical reflection as a learning strategy; and the value of the integration of critical reflection to promote lifelong learning.

A mixed methods research approach was primarily utilised to monitor facilitation of learning initiatives and appropriate activities for strengthening the learning-centred approach, through reflective journals and reflective learning groups. A quantitative and qualitative study was used in which a pilot study questionnaire, observations, structured interviews and questionnaires were conducted and completed.

The findings of this investigation indicate that critical reflection adds value to the effectiveness of learning. The investigation also revealed the value of sharing learning experiences in a small learning group and proved that the learning environment for radiography education allows enough opportunities to integrate an alternative learning strategy such as critical reflection.

All role players in health science education need to build their own skills to function effectively as whole brain thinkers with a view to maximizing learning effectiveness.

Reflective practice enhances lifelong learning and can also be utilised as a tool for quality control of the learning programme.

Key words: critical reflection, reflection, reflective practice, learning strategies, transformative learning, flexible learning styles, lifelong learning, metalearning, work-based learning, reflective learning groups



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