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# Critical Thinking for Global Citizenship Education

## A Conceptual Framework

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Brigid Golden

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Brigid Golden

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*This book is dedicated to you – the critical, radical, curious educators of our past, present and future striving to navigate the complexities of an ever evolving, complex, and interconnected world, and to create critical global learning opportunities in your educational spaces.*

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# ABBREVIATIONS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| ANGEL  | Academic Network of Global Education and Learning                |
| CoE    | Council of Europe  |
| DERC   | Development Education Research Centre                            |
| GCE    | Global Citizenship Education                                     |
| GENE   | Global Education Network Europe                                  |
| HE     | Higher Education   |
| ITE    | Initial Teacher Education  |
| LCP    | Leaving Certificate Programme                                    |
| NCCA   | National Council for Curriculum and Assessment                   |
| NGO    | Non-Governmental Organisation                                    |
| OECD   | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development           |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |

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PART I

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The Need for a Framework for Critical  
Global Learning



## CHAPTER 1

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# Critical Global Learning: Learning to Unlearn

## INTRODUCTION

This book focuses on sharing the outcomes of a research study which took place within the nexus between the fields of critical thinking and global citizenship education (GCE) (Golden, 2022). While there are significant overlaps between critical thinking and GCE, I found a gap in research that connects this intersection with the implications for higher education (HE). This chapter will focus on conceptualising critical global learning, which I propose as the intersection between critical thinking and global citizenship education (GCE). In doing so, this chapter will explore, and comment on the debates, internationally, around terminology used to define this field, offering a rationale for use of ‘critical global learning’ in the context set out in this book.

Through an exploration of the field(s) surrounding global learning, this chapter will also focus on the contribution which GCE can make to fulfilling the purposes of education and will highlight the significant value that criticality within the context of justice-oriented global learning can have for society. Additionally, this chapter focuses on pedagogy and positionality, outlining the key considerations from a critical global learning standpoint.

## CONCEPTUALISING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The variety of, sometimes contradictory, conceptualisations and approaches to GCE can be confusing. As an evolving idea with roots both in radical activism and missionary work which is now becoming more mainstreamed internationally, GCE gets conceptualised as a theory, a pedagogy, a field, a movement, an adjectival model, a discipline, a methodology, a personal commitment or belief system, or an educational approach by different people and in different spaces. This book strongly advocates for the importance of recognising GCE as a distinct field with unique contributions to be made to academia, education, and society. This status of GCE is reflected in the various academic bodies such as the Academic Network for Global Education and Learning (ANGEL), in the establishment of research centres such as the Development Education Research Centre (DERC) in the UK and the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship in Ireland, the options to engage in degree courses focused specifically on GCE, and the existence of GCE focused academic journals such as *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review* or the *Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*.

However, there is an argument to be made for assigning each of the other listed labels to GCE also. Firstly, none of these framings can exist in isolation, the theory must connect with the personal and the pedagogical. Indeed, education and teaching must be a conversation between theory and practice if we are to reach the ambitious goals of GCE. Furthermore, a teacher in a classroom may focus on the core methodological approaches, or view GCE as an adjectival model when considering the structural implications of planning within a curricular framework. Moreover, GCE does not exist solely within academia and consequently must not lose its strong historical connection to civil society and grassroots activism. There are many who have dedicated their life's work to GCE for whom the academic component is merely supplementary, and who would view GCE as a movement or a commitment to the realisation of a set of core values. Indeed, as will be explored later in this chapter, as GCE becomes more mainstreamed within formal education, we must not lose these connections to the origins of this educational approach. Rather than shy away from the complexity of naming, defining, and conceptualising GCE, this book posits that real change comes when we get personal, emotional, and messy and consequently advocates for an embracing of the messiness of the multiple arms and interpretations of GCE.

A further aspect of GCE which could be viewed either as a complexity or a strength is its status as an umbrella term which encompasses many related educational approaches such as Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability (or Education for Sustainable Development), Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention, Intercultural Education, Global Justice Education, and Global Education and Learning. Within Ireland, the context of the research upon which this book is based, our history lies with development education and so our interpretation of GCE is heavily influenced by our historical connection with development practice. Indeed, the terms development education and GCE are often used interchangeably by many within the sector in Ireland, including by Irish Aid within the Department of Foreign Affairs, who fund the majority of GCE work in Ireland. Whereas the Irish Department of Education has a focus on both Education for Sustainable Development and Intercultural Education, while some individual non-governmental organisations (NGOs), researchers, and educators' favour and draw on Human Rights Education. In other parts of Europe, Global Education or Global Learning are used interchangeably as the overarching term. All of the listed approaches may vary in terms of their specific focuses and emphasis; however, they are linked by a collective commitment to global justice. Dillon (2024a) argues for the need to debate and carefully consider the influences and assumptions about education, and the world which are implied by different terminology rather than simply accepting a shift in discourse. We need, for example to consider what we mean by 'citizenship' within GCE, how 'intercultural' is interpreted within intercultural education, and what 'sustainability' means in the context of education for sustainable development (Dillon, 2024a).

While some within the sector have embraced the shift from development education to GCE (Doorly, 2024), others have been critical of it (O'Toole, 2024). From my perspective from within the sector in Ireland, rather than the move to using the term GCE over development education feeling like an active choice, it has felt like a choice largely made for us by government bodies and funders such as Irish Aid and the Department of Education, arguably, not those 'at the cold face' of the work. The move to terminology focused on citizenship, be it global, active, responsible, or other is also reflective of a wider international trend "driven by global targets and institutions such as SDG 4.7 and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)" (Gaynor, 2024, p. 29). There has been some resistance to the change in terminology,

particularly within the NGO sector and amongst some academics who have retained the use of development education. However, others have embraced the change, seeing the citizenship focus as a move away from just ‘informing’ the public about development issues towards a model focused on engaging and involving the public in the conversation and solutions (Doorly, 2024).

The Global Education Network Europe (GENE) (2020) maintain that the use of an umbrella term acts as a quality control measure to ensure that none of the core tenets of global education are neglected, regardless of the terminology being used. GENE (2020, p. 26) list these non-negotiable core concepts as “a focus on global justice, on economic development and equality, on solidarity, on the relationship between local and global dimensions of justice, on action for greater human rights for all, and on planetary sustainability”.

The definition of global education adopted by GENE is taken from the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050:

Global Education is education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts and minds to the reality of the world at local and global level. It empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding. It involves respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future. Global Education encompasses a broad range of educational provision: formal, non-formal and informal; life-long and life-wide. We consider it essential to the transformative power of, and the transformation of, education. (GENE, 2022, p. 3)

This definition acknowledges that there is significant inequality in the world and positions education as a potential catalyst for change in addressing injustice. This assertion is mirrored by the varied traditions which constitute global education but which each have their own nuanced approaches or origins. In seeking to find a common ground between their distinct traditions and approaches, policymakers involved in GENE continuously and actively seek out what unites their approaches and GENE suggest that the overlaps include “a global justice perspective, a focus on how the local relates to the global, and the aim to enable learners to take action to make the world more just, more sustainable, and more supportive of solidarity” (GENE, 2020, p. 25).

Hunt (2012) declares that global education presents a challenge to learners to become comfortable with ambiguity and a multiplicity of perspectives due to its focus on challenging stereotypes. Indeed, he (*ibid*) explains that global education is concerned with aspects of the curriculum which allow learners to situate themselves within the wider world through an exploration of their relationships with others, their histories, and asks them to reflect on their present realities and possible futures. Tye (1990) outlines how this ambiguity might be fostered in a classroom by affirming that global education involves learning about “those problems and issues that cut across national boundaries, about interconnectedness and recognising the importance of looking at issues through the eyes and minds of others” (quoted in Bourn, 2020, p. 13). Furthermore, in connecting local and global issues, global education advocates for sustainable and thoughtful action to generate change (Hunt, 2012).

For UNESCO the focus on GCE evolved out of a desire for education to “prevent violence, to strengthen a climate of tolerance and security, and to foster the development of values of peace, tolerance, and mutual understandings as well as capacities for the non-violent resolution of conflicts” (Pigozzi, 2006, p. 3). It is clear that at the core of UNESCO’s approach is a focus on international relations and ensuring that increased migration and interdependence does not lead to conflict, and can be linked to the origins of peace education as advocated for by the United Nations.

## PURPOSE AND CONTRIBUTION OF GCE WITHIN WIDER EDUCATIONAL THEORY

GCE is inherently aspirational, often cited as aiming to take action towards a fairer, more just, equitable, and sustainable world for everyone (Council of Europe (CoE), 2002, GENE, 2022, Irish Aid, 2021). While this comes with inherent challenges (Golden & Donnelly, 2024), it can also make a significant contribution both within the education sector and the wider world. Indeed, Bosio and Torres (2019, p. 752) state that “teaching and learning GCE may help our planet, global peace, and people through its contribution to civic engagement, in its classical dimensions of knowledge, skills, and values”. Action, and having an impact on the world around us, is an integral component of GCE which has the potential to respond to the purposes of education articulated within wider educational theory.

Although a subjective topic, Spiel et al. (2018) identified four distinct but interrelated purposes of education found across different contexts. They are humanistic, civic, economic, and furthering social equity and justice. These purposes can be seen reflected in the work of Freire and Dewey, who both present the purpose of education as broader than the impact it can have for individuals and stress the importance of education contributing to social progress, thus aligned in many ways with the core objectives of GCE. Freire (1970, 1974) proposes emancipation as the purpose of education. While Dewey (1899, 1902, 1897) claims that education should prepare learners for life in society, supporting them to reach their full potential and be equipped to respond to challenges they encounter as citizens. Their assertions connect to the humanistic, civic, and equity purposes of education offered by Spiel et al. (2018).

While Spiel et al. (2018) maintain that education should focus equally on all four purposes, the reality is that there is often an overemphasis on economic productivity and growth as the goal of education (Ball, 2016; Burke, 2011; Liddy & Parker-Jenkins, 2013; Spiel et al., 2018). Education focused on economic productivity is reflected in a neoliberal move towards increased assessment and high stakes accountability for schools (Ball, 2016). This focus can sometimes come at the expense of the other educational goals, such as those focused on equity and justice.

Humanistic education aims to “infuse students with values, knowledge and the abilities required to flourish as human beings and participate fully in their society” (Spiel et al., 2018, p. 17). In addition, education with a humanistic focus also honours learners’ individuality and provides opportunities that support identity formation (Spiel et al., 2018, p. 17). This goal is reflected in the aims of education presented in the Irish National Curriculum, which include “to enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual” (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), 1999, p. 7).

The Irish Curriculum also focuses on the importance of civic education, stating that education should “enable the child to develop as a social being through living and cooperating with others and so contribute to the good of society” (NCCA, 1999, p. 7). Civic education acknowledges the long-term impact of education on individuals and recognises the potential roles learners can play when they are active members of society. Through civic education, learners are expected to be informed, responsible, engaged citizens who have the necessary skills to understand and

participate in creating, maintaining, and improving societies (Spiel et al., 2018), all core tenets of GCE.

Finally, education can be looked upon to contribute to social equity and justice in societies as it is often used as a tool for social mobility by individuals, families, or groups of people accessing education as a support in breaking barriers of social, ethnic, cultural exclusion, and fragmentation (Spiel et al., 2018). The Irish National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 places significant importance on the role of higher education in contributing to society by developing and applying research-led responses to social, economic, and civic challenges (Department of Education, 2011).

As can be seen, GCE can play a significant role in contributing to the humanistic goals of education through a focus on developing knowledge and values while honouring student's individuality. Additionally, GCE skills align with civic aims due to their focus on supporting students to become critical and informed citizens. Additionally, the underlying values which underpin all GCE work ensure that a focus on justice and equity are retained and a commitment to those values fostered within education.

Biesta (2020, p. 1024) on the other hand posits that conversations about what makes education good should fundamentally consider "three domains of purpose - qualification, socialisation and subjectification". Qualification, as the first domain, considers what education qualifies learners to do. This is not isolated to qualifications for specific jobs, but also includes the set of skills learners acquire through education which would set them up for life as responsible and active citizens (Biesta, 2009). As the second function of education, socialisation refers to the multiple ways in which education influences how we become part of "particular social, cultural and political 'orders'" (Biesta, 2009, p. 40). Biesta (2009) acknowledges that this second domain occurs due to the inherently political nature of education which he posits is never neutral but always focused on imparting particular values, whether explicitly and consciously or through the hidden curriculum. Finally, the subjectification domain of purpose relates to the extent to which education contributes to processes which enable learners to "become more autonomous and independent in their thinking and acting" (Biesta, 2009, p. 41).

The three domains or functions of education identified by Biesta all map clearly onto GCE. The focus on preparing learners for society through developing the skills of active and responsible citizenship, the commitment to social development and values in education, and the goal

of ensuring learners become independent learners capable of making decisions about and directing their own actions are all core GCE tenets. Indeed, GCE is often framed as a ‘values-based framework’ (Torres & Bosio, 2020) which denounces the idea of ‘neutrality’ within education, and which focuses on building capacity for engaged citizenship (Bourn, 2021). It is clear that GCE, as a distinct pedagogical approach and field of education, offers a strong approach to meeting the goals of education and responding to what have been identified as the interrelated purposes of education.

### THE GCE WE NEED IN A COMPLEX AND EVOLVING SOCIETY

We live, as all generations have and will continue to do, in a time of complexity and uncertainty. The pressing challenges we face internationally such as globalisation, the rise of mis- and dis- information across both social and mainstream media, the rise of the influence of artificial intelligence, the growing gap between the richest and poorest in societies across the world, and the increasingly visible effects of climate change speak to the need for a GCE which centres critical thinking. Furthermore, we are faced by new versions of challenges which we have seen across history and societies such as migration as a result of war, conflict, standard of living, and now climate, or the rise of political leaders with narrow conceptualisations of nationalism who promote xenophobic populism, thus legitimising hate speech and enabling active discrimination in societies.

McCartney (2019) cautions that populism enables the erosion of democracy and democratic values. Democracy, by definition, values multiple perspectives and gives opportunity to opposing sides to be heard and allows citizens to make informed choices and find compromise. McCartney (2019) maintains that democracy is being lost through the rising support for narrow nationalist politics and that education must answer the call of John Dewey in ensuring that democracy is born new and fostered in every generation. Westheimer (2019, p. 9) declares that the waning trust in democratic values and the “toxic mix of ideological polarisation” we are currently seeing in countries across the world makes it critical that education should ask learners to imagine more just societies, should provide learners with multiple perspectives on controversial issues, and should actively teach them to be critical. He (ibid) believes that centring education on democratic values and promoting critical thinking

is crucial to counteract rising xenophobic populism. Indeed, Bosio and Torres (2019, p. 755) highlight the need for “growing levels of rationality in the age of scepticism, fake news, and growing alienation”. The theory of ‘common good’ they (ibid) present demands that education be underpinned by a moral obligation and responsiveness that goes beyond individualism, but is based on values of mutuality and reciprocity in terms of a ‘looking forward’ educational theory. Hicks (2008), a proponent of futures education, recommends that learners explore the intergenerational links between past, present, and future to support the development of a sense of continuity and change and ultimately a responsibility for the future. Making connections within the temporal dimension is also advocated for strongly as a key element of critical thinking by Alston (2001, p. 38) who maintains that “critical thinkers are seeking to make connections between what has been known, what is happening now, and what could be”.

Torres (2017, p. 14) presents GCE as “an intervention in search of a theory” which should add value to national citizenship. Using his conceptualization, GCE offers education an approach to counteract the challenges faced by our global society such as those mentioned earlier. A focus on how education can prepare learners to act as responsive, active citizens guided by a set of moral values underpinned by a commitment to a global collective good is at the heart of GCE. Indeed, GCE offers educators an opportunity to consider the purpose and impact of education beyond simply assessment, curricular structures, and international league tables. As a cross-curricular, embedded approach, GCE can be used to enhance curricula through a connection to real-world problems, deepening learners understanding of the reality of the world around them and ultimately preparing learners for their participation in society as citizens.

However, in focusing on the citizenship component of GCE, it is crucial not to forget the radical roots of this field and not allow GCE to be sanitised by incorporation into mainstream education. If GCE is to be truly transformative, it must retain a focus on critical action for global social justice rooted in a commitment to change and an understanding of systemic injustice. Indeed, Cotter (2018, p. 138) argues that we should “not allow this hard-won tradition to be diluted or swayed from its radical roots”. Certainly, if we are to genuinely address the ambitious goals of GCE, a radical approach is necessary to address “the complex and intersecting power relations, structures, discourses, institutions and practice which cause injustice, inequality, discrimination and

exploitation in the world” (Dillon, 2024b, p. 3). Indeed, many calls for an approach to GCE which is ‘disruptive’, which challenges neoliberal and capitalist orthodoxies (Golden & Donnelly, 2024). In the call for a radical, critical, disruptive approach to GCE, the concern is that in its mainstreaming GCE may take a ‘soft’ (Andreotti, 2006) approach which can downplay the structural nature of inequality in the name of promoting an educational approach which feels more palatable or ‘easy’.

Furthermore, critiques of GCE often relate to the Western assumptions which can be embedded within the approach (Andreotti, 2006; Goren & Yemini, 2017). Andreotti (2006, p. 44), drawing on the work of many authors who critique the notion of global citizenship, emphasises that often the lived practice of GCE promotes Western values and interests as universal or global, which in turn “naturalises the myth of Western supremacy in the rest of the world”. In addressing these critiques of GCE, Andreotti has developed a framework for soft and critical GCE in which the terms are hierarchical and a move towards more critical approaches is encouraged (Andreotti, 2006).

## TOWARDS A PEDAGOGY OF CRITICAL GLOBAL LEARNING

This book presents an approach to GCE which centres critical thinking. While there are significant overlaps between critical thinking and GCE, there is a gap in terms of the pedagogical implications of this intersection for practice in higher education. I adopt the term critical global learning to capture the interconnections between these fields and offer the following definition:

Critical global learning is a reflective educational process founded on the values of global justice, equity and human rights. It focuses on engaging in understanding and questioning the dominant systems and structures which create and perpetuate multiple forms of inequality globally. It encourages us to consider how our lives interact with the questions being explored and fosters an interest in acting collectively to address inequality. It is a learning process which recognises different ways of understanding the world and consequently draws on multiple perspectives to inform the learning process. (Golden, 2023, p. 3)

When developing the conceptual framework which this book presents, which I offer as a pedagogy of critical global learning, I drew on critical

conceptualisations of GCE, combined with an awareness of the limitations of both critical thinking and GCE to inform the development of a *Model for Teaching Critical Global Learning* (outlined in Chapter Four) and a *Planning Tool for Implementing Critical Global Learning* (outlined in Chapter Five). The combination of the Model and the Planning Tool contribute a new framework to further our understanding of the intersections of these fields. The principles of critical global learning on which this framework is built are: a critical approach, the centrality of dialogue, the importance of active and participatory learning, and a pedagogy of discomfort.

Alexander refers to pedagogy as involving “what one needs to know and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted” (Alexander, 2004, p. 11). This conceptualisation of pedagogy is inclusive of both theory and practice. Alexander (2004) is as much concerned about what happens in the classroom as the rationale behind those decisions. From a theoretical perspective, I draw on Freire’s (1974) *Critical Consciousness*, Boler’s (1999) *Pedagogy of Discomfort*, and Bourn’s (2015) *Pedagogy of Development Education*. The skills included within the Model outlined in Chapter Four speak to an interactive approach to teaching which is focused on dialogue, modelling skills and attitudes, sharing challenging content knowledge, and supporting students to engage with and reflect on their learning.

Critical global learning aims to support students to critically reflect on the world and therefore relies heavily on a dialogical approach to teaching. To support the development of ‘critical consciousness’ Freire (1974) promotes an emancipatory approach to education which focuses on raising learners’ critical capacity, which can support them in changing their perceptions of reality. This is done through equal dialogue between learners and educators as opposed to the ‘banking approach’ in which educators have absolute authority and ownership of knowledge (Freire, 1970). Freire (1970) considered this dialogical approach to be ‘humanising’, his (ibid) approach was focused on empowering people who were oppressed to become critically aware of the nature of this oppression and to challenge it through reflection and action, which he called praxis. The process relies on linking lessons from the classroom with learners’ lived experiences outside the classroom (Freire, 1974). Although the origins of Freire’s approach are in liberation for the oppressed, his practices

continue to be used across the world in classrooms of learners from all backgrounds, not just those who experience oppression (Shih, 2018).

Boler's (1999, p. 176) 'pedagogy of discomfort' which she describes as "both an invitation to inquiry as well as a call to action" echoes Freire's conceptualisation of praxis. Boler (1999, p. 176) invites us to learn to "inhabit a more ambiguous and flexible sense of self" in her approach thus inviting learners to engage in collective critical enquiry to learn to see the world differently. A core tenet of Boler's (1999) pedagogy of discomfort is that it be collective, enabling learners and educators to work together on unearthing 'disruptive possibilities'. Boler (1999) believes that education holds the potential to be a space where learners and educators can together unearth and engage in disruptive practices, such as challenging orthodoxies, questioning oppressive practices, and exploring alternative approaches for justice. The collective approach mirrors the assertions of hooks (2010) and Freire (1970) that the teacher-learner relationship be rooted in dialogue and mutual respect. Working collaboratively rather than individually to examine and explore global justice issues enables learners and educators alike to keep each other accountable to the broader nature of issues to avoid reducing complex issues to individual interpretation or impact.

In her pedagogy, Boler (1999) pays particular attention to the emotions which emerge when engaged in critical enquiry. She (ibid) highlights the importance of recognising how emotions can impact on what a person chooses to see, or not to see. Furthermore, the questioning of cherished beliefs and values which follows from engaging in a pedagogy of discomfort can inevitably lead to strong emotions such as fear and anger (Boler, 1999). It might seem counter-intuitive to engage in an educational approach which may trigger such a strong emotional response in students. However, Faulkner (2012, p. 227) says that the rationale for this approach is emancipatory. She (ibid) believes that Boler's (1999) pedagogy of discomfort offers opportunities which enable us to identify where our reactions may be rooted in societal constructs and help to move beyond these shackles to engage in critical enquiry and disruptive practices. Ultimately, at the core of Boler's (1999) pedagogy of discomfort is a desire for learners and educators alike to critically examine personal values and attitudes in order to enhance awareness and critique of our self-constructed images of ourselves and others and how this can impact on how we see the world.

Furthermore, Bourn (2015, p. 195) proposes that a pedagogy of development education, closely aligned with the approach to critical global learning as it is defined here, is “a process of learning within which learners will interpret and engage in debates on development and make reference to their personal experiences, wider social and cultural influences, and their viewpoints on the wider world”. Ultimately, Bourn (2015) states that it is not the content alone that is important in this field, but the way in which information is presented, perceived, interpreted, and promoted. GCE involves active and participatory learning with a dialogical focus (Bourn, 2015; GENE, 2020; Irish Aid, 2017). Additionally, it centres content knowledge that can be challenging and uncomfortable for learners (Andreotti, 2006; Hunt, 2012; Shah & Brown, 2010). This requires educators to recognise and encourage active engagement from learners in developing their own interpretations (Bourn, 2015).

## LEARNING TO UNLEARN—CONFRONTING OUR BIASES

The conceptualisation of critical global learning presented in this book relies heavily on a willingness to confront our own biases and misconceptions, and a commitment to learning to unlearn ‘status quo stories’ (Keating, 2007) in order to enable the imagining of new stories. Approaches to GCE which do not confront personal and societal biases can lead to the perpetuation of systems of oppression and discourses of discrimination when people are not taught to question narratives about the world around them (Khoo & McCloskey, 2015).

GCE approaches which do not centre learning to unlearn are often referred to as ‘soft’ approaches (Andreotti, 2006). Soft GCE can perpetuate international structures that create inequality by “locating the causes of poverty in the lack of resources and infrastructure in countries of the global South” (Waldron, 2014). Contrastingly, critical GCE requires the learner to acknowledge and examine their complicity in global structures (Waldron, 2014). Andreotti (2006) strongly contends that the conceptualisations of global justice and education that educators draw on are crucial in determining whether the outcomes are damaging or liberating for those involved and the societies they inhabit, both locally and globally. According to Andreotti (2006, p. 41), if the focus remains predominantly on soft approaches to GCE, we risk current and future generations projecting “their beliefs and myths as universal” and, ultimately ensuring

that power relations and violence similar to those in colonial times would continue to be reproduced.

The framework used by Andreotti and de Souza in their 'Other Eyes' project implores the learner to engage in 'learning to unlearn' as they acknowledge that each person's perspective on what is considered 'good' is related to where they come from socially, historically, and culturally and that there are multiple perspectives to be considered (Andreotti & deSouza, 2008, p. 29). They (ibid p. 29) further propose a focus on learning to learn, during which time students "learn to receive new perspectives, to re-arrange and expand [their] own and to deepen [their] understanding". The focus lies in supporting the student to acknowledge the limitations of their experiences and perspectives and recognise the multiplicity of valid viewpoints in relation to different GCE topics. Furthermore, mirroring similar contentions proposed by hooks (2010), Andreotti and deSouza (2008) propose that the purpose in reflecting on contested topics is to ensure engagement in education does not produce identical opinions in all learners. Rather, they promote exposure to difference and becoming comfortable with the discomfort of topics not easily defined, as advocated for by Hunt (2012), Boler (1999), and Keating (2007). This is not necessarily an easy process in the classroom where many conflicting perspectives may co-exist in relation to any given topics. However, hooks (2010) promotes the development of an engaged classroom which provides opportunities for dissenting opinions to be aired, discussed, and responded to with respect. Following engagement with modules focused on developing this skill, students should be expected to demonstrate an awareness of the complex and contested nature of knowledge. In their definitions and explanations of topics, it should be clear that students have considered and evaluated multiple viewpoints before coming to their own conclusions.

Andreotti (2006) argues for critical GCE to counteract the potentially damaging impact of uncritical campaigns and educational approaches, which do not pay due attention to the complexities of global issues. Within critical GCE, learners are given the opportunity to critically analyse their personal positions in relation to their culture and context, while also being encouraged to situate their learning within broader global structures and take responsibility for their decision making (Hunt, 2012). When engaging with global issues, students of critical GCE will

consider the historical and political contexts involved in these controversial topics while ultimately striving for change (Goren & Yemini, 2017).

## REFLEXIVITY, SELF-AWARENESS, AND POSITIONALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CRITICAL GLOBAL LEARNING

Palmer (1998, p. 2) states that “we teach who we are” and that as we teach, we project the essence of who we are, including our values, onto our students and the subject matter we are teaching about. Who we are is undeniably intertwined with the ways in which we approach our subject matter and the relationships we develop with our students. Consequently, to engage in ‘good teaching’, teachers must commit to getting to know themselves (Palmer, 1998). Engaging in self-discovery to get to know the self and our values better can be challenging, as it can happen that we notice where our values and verbal commitments do not match our actions. This is what Whitehead (1989, p. 42) calls “experiencing oneself as a living contradiction” or what Brookfield (2017) refers to as feeling like an imposter.

Furthermore, due to the central role that reflexivity plays within any critical thinking or global citizenship education (GCE) practice, reflection on your positionality as a practitioner should be a core consideration when navigating tensions in your practice. Our identities and positionality have a significant impact on our practice in a number of ways. Who we are may be a catalyst for tension in the classroom, be that aspects of our identity which have relevance to a topic we are teaching, or personally held values which impact on the manner in which we present information, or even our past experiences which influence our values or beliefs in relation to a topic we are teaching. It is crucial to be aware not only of our students’ individual backgrounds and how these may have influence in the classroom, but also our own.

In ‘*The Courage to Teach*’ Palmer (1998) encourages us to come to know ourselves better to enable us to be more present and responsive educators. He (ibid p. 2) states that “teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness, for better or worse”. Furthermore, Fook (2019) holds that reflexivity involves understanding who we are and the ways in which our thinking and actions are influenced by wider social influences and contexts.

There are numerous ways in which my identity and positionality impact on my teaching of critical global learning. For example, my identity as a white, Irish, settled, cis-gender, heterosexual woman will always impact the way in which it is possible for me to teach about diversity, or how I work with students with marginalised identities. I am middle-class, and have been for much of my life, my first-hand experiences of oppression are extremely limited. Regardless of how much I know intellectually about discrimination, I continue to experience disbelief when I encounter it due to my many privileged identities, I still have plenty of my own ‘unlearning’ to go.

As it is for most people, my childhood was instrumental in the formation of my identity and the values I strive to embody to this day. My childhood was steeped in values connected with GCE such as human rights and justice, for example I attended anti-war protests in a buggy, and my family had a fair-trade shop in our house. My history has been both an enabler and a challenge in my career. While I naturally connected with and gravitated towards GCE, I have often felt frustration when working with students who have had different starting points in life and who struggled to connect with the values GCE promotes, or who bring alternative interpretations of topics I sometimes think of as absolute. Though challenging, acknowledging the dichotomy between my own life and my students’ lives has helped me to strengthen my teaching approach and deepen my reflexivity, leading me to be more vulnerable and honest both with myself and with them.

Additionally, I continue to experience myself as a ‘living contradiction’ (Whitehead, 1989) on a daily basis. While I aim to champion values of climate justice, I struggle with decisions around air travel, my diet and wardrobe are both imperfect from a sustainability perspective, and I don’t live a zero-waste lifestyle. Although I am passionate about the importance of action and its connection with GCE, I don’t always prioritise time in my own life to engage in public collective action outside of work. Despite teaching about anti-racism, I don’t always immediately recognise when I engage in microaggressions myself or always know how to respond to racism when I encounter it. I am imperfect and don’t ‘live out’ my values flawlessly, though I continue to reflect on them and aim for improvement. Awareness and acknowledgement of these contradictions can be helpful in the classroom, if I share them, making issues more real and personal for students. However, without acknowledging them, engagement with GCE can seem intimidating to students who may perceive the values it

advocates for as impossibly perfect targets and therefore miss the bumpy journey necessary to get close to them.

Some of these examples from my life may sound familiar to you, or you may have different struggles and successes than me. I encourage you to use my incomplete and imperfect list as an opportunity to reflect on your own personal life and social identity, consider what is important to you and how that plays out, or not, in your daily life.

Furthermore, there are two aspects of our instrumental positionality as educators which I believe are common for all of us: power imbalances and a multiplicity of roles being balanced.

### *Power Imbalances*

As teachers there are power imbalances built in to our roles due to the inherently hierarchical nature of formal education. There is a clear power imbalance between us as educators and our students, regardless of how much we may focus on relationship building, or commit to co-constructing knowledge with our pupils. As the person who sets the curriculum, writes the assessment, and assigns grades, there will always be a power imbalance. This imbalance can lead to a dependent relationship in which students do not engage with their learning or assessments in a genuine manner but present work or contributions which they perceive to be desired. This can have a significant impact on students critical thinking development as it hinders their authentic engagement with self-reflection and limits their ability to develop and express opinions and values that are truly their own. As an approach focused on analysing and evaluating information, when this is done through the lens of what they perceive to be desired by their teacher, any critical thinking capacity developed in this way will not survive outside of our classrooms and away from this dependent relationship.

Consequently, as teachers we have a responsibility to ensure that we approach the teaching of critical global learning with an awareness of the potentially harmful impact of the intrinsic power imbalance within the classroom. This requires time, and repeated reinforcement of genuine engagement from students. When students can see their ideas and values praised and encouraged, they will learn that it is acceptable, or even desirable within this context, to consider and present genuine personal ideas, even if these diverge from what others in the room, including the teacher, think.

### *Multiplicity of Roles Being Balanced*

As human beings, we all spend our lives traversing our multiple roles. None of us are only teachers, we are also friends, family members, partners, sports fans, musicians, voters, consumers, business owners, volunteers, representatives of various professional bodies, and/or many other roles. When we teach in the classroom, we do so while both consciously and unconsciously representing our many roles. We may not be actively aware of the impact that our personal roles have on our teaching, but most teachers will have experienced instances where we must follow the official regulations of a professional body we represent or who employs us.

There can sometimes be tensions between the values we wish to represent and pass on in our teaching, and the ways in which we may be restricted by the institutions we work within or the curricula we need to follow. Furthermore, within the context of GCE, there are numerous potential tensions between the values we aim to teach and the choices we make in our personal lives. As outlined earlier, I have been forced to examine my everyday habits and to consider whether I can authentically teach about justice while wearing fast fashion, or encourage students to examine their relationship to climate change while I eat meat. To teach GCE cannot be solely a professional endeavour, but must also have an impact on how we live our lives outside of the classroom.

While I aim to incorporate a pedagogy of discomfort in the classroom to support teaching about critical global learning, the same approach can be helpful in navigating this tension both personally and professionally. Boler's (1999) pedagogy of discomfort encourages us to revel in uneasiness and use it as an opportunity for growth and learning. While as human beings, we will always navigate multiple and sometimes conflicting roles, as educators aiming to promote criticality, doing so with an openness to and embracing of the discomfort it may give rise to can help us to be more critical and reflexive human beings and ultimately educators.

## BOOK LAYOUT

This book is divided into three sections. Section One includes the first three chapters which provide a rationale for a framework for critical global learning through a focus on problematising critical global learning. This chapter has focused on situating GCE within current global challenges,

educational theory, and establishing the need for a pedagogy of critical global learning. Chapter Two focuses on critical thinking, exploring commonly cited definitions alongside connections with GCE. In particular, Chapter Two highlights some often unnamed critiques of critical thinking. Chapter Three first outlines the rationale for creating the framework and the process followed. Section Two is comprised of two chapters which outline the core contribution of this book, a conceptual framework for critical global learning. Chapters Four and Five cover the two components of the framework, namely the *Model for Teaching Critical Global Learning* and the *Planning Tool for Implementing Critical Global Learning* respectively. Finally, the third section of the book explores some of the implications from the framework shared in Section Two. Chapter Six is concerned with the tensions which arise when teaching critical global learning, while Chapter Seven concludes the book by focusing on the opportunities for critical global learning for the reader with a comment on considerations for readers when planning for the implementation of critical global learning in their own contexts.

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## CHAPTER 2

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# Critiquing Critical Thinking

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a perspective on critical thinking not often acknowledged. There is ample theory and research which hails critical thinking as a core twenty-first-century skill, an essential objective of higher education, and an ultimate goal of global citizenship education (GCE). However, rarely, within a field that values criticality, and thus questioning concepts presented as definitive is critical thinking itself critiqued. We are used to considering critical thinking as a universal good, and it is repeatedly listed as an outcome of education, but this chapter offers an opportunity to pause and consider whether it is always ‘good’ or whether there is a need to exercise caution when engaging in criticality with our learners. In addition to outlining the critiques of critical thinking, this chapter will first establish the commonalities in conceptualisation amongst critical thinking writers followed by a consideration of the potential impact of critical thinking within the context of GCE.

### DEFINING CRITICAL THINKING

Before exploring potential flaws within critical thinking, it is crucial to first consider what is meant by critical thinking and what the common arguments are in relation to its conceptualisation. As an interdisciplinary area which is named as a goal of many very different fields, it is inevitable

that there may be some distinctions in how critical thinking is defined and used. Indeed, although included as a goal or outcome of many education programmes, critical thinking is rarely clearly defined but often presented as a universal concept. As will be outlined here, there are multiple aspects to critical thinking and at times conceptualisations can be contradictory. It is essential to consider what is meant by critical thinking if it is to be used as a marker of success. Fundamentally, without defining critical thinking, it is not possible to set out success criteria to evaluate critical thinking development.

In an effort to bring together different ideas related to critical thinking, the 1990 *Delphi Report*, from the American Philosophical Association, reflects a landmark two-year project undertaken to establish an international expert consensus on the definition of critical thinking. The resulting definition, commonly used in critical thinking literature, maintains that critical thinking is:

...purposeful, self-regulatory judgement which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference as well as an explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgement is based. (Facione, 1990, p. 3)

Through an exploration of a variety of definitions of critical thinking, Fisher (2011) identified commonalities present across various definitions highlighting that many definitions present critical thinking as a skill-based activity which must meet various intellectual standards, including clarity, relevance, adequacy, coherence and that it requires the interpretation and evaluation of observations. Furthermore, many authors (Daniel & Auriac, 2011; Ennis, 1987; Johnson & Hamby, 2015) include within their conceptualisations of critical thinking an indication that its purpose is oriented towards the thinker making decisions and judgements about what to believe and how to act. Additionally, Fisher and Scriven (1997, p. 21) propose that thinking is not critical simply because the thinker aims to be, but that they must be competent in the associated skills. This is a significant development in the understanding of critical thinking; the implication is that for thinking to be considered critical, it must meet specific criteria and that a person can demonstrate different levels of competency (Fisher, 2011). Essentially, a person cannot simply declare themselves a critical thinker, but must be able to demonstrate a set of key skills to a third party.

Fisher (2011) further maintains that the core of the original conceptualisation offered by Dewey remains constant throughout the various definitions offered in critical thinking literature. Dewey (1910, p. 6), seen by many as the father of critical thinking in education, defines reflective thinking, widely accepted to be synonymous with critical thinking, as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends”. Glaser (1941) builds on Dewey’s reflective thinking conceptualisation by mirroring the contention that critical thinkers must employ persistent effort and highlight the need for critical thinkers to employ knowledge, skills, and attitudes that ensure they are disposed to examining beliefs and ideas. Furthermore, both Wechsler et al. (2018) and Elder and Paul (1996) conceptualise a core critical thinking disposition as the motivation and tendency to incorporate criticality into their thinking processes.

One aspect of critical thinking which has given rise to controversy is the extent to which it can be considered a general or cross-disciplinary skill, and interwoven with this controversy is the interaction between knowledge and critical thinking. McPeck (1981) distinguished himself from Dewey and Glaser by focusing on knowledge as a key precursor for criticality. McPeck (ibid) is a leading promoter of subject-specific criticality and does not believe it to be a transferable skill across disciplines. Similarly, Lipman (1988) maintains that while critical thinking skills may be generalisable, the criteria required to engage in and judge criticality is subject and context-specific. In contrast, Elder and Paul (1996) contend that a critical thinker must continuously self-assess their own thinking in all aspects of their lives, and therefore set up critical thinking as a generalisable skill. In support of this approach Fisher (2011) maintains that the skills involved in becoming a critical thinker, once mastered, can be applied across a multitude of contexts and scenarios.

Although critical thinking has been acknowledged as a multidimensional construct which can include cognitive, dispositional, motivational, attitudinal, and metacognitive functions (Bensley & Spero, 2014; Wechsler et al., 2018), it is more common for definitions of critical thinking to focus solely on the cognitive processes involved. The key processes identified across literature are ‘analysis’, ‘evaluation’, and ‘inference’ (Bensley & Spero, 2014; Dwyer et al., 2014; Facione, 1990). Dwyer et al. (2014) maintain that when used appropriately, the combination of these three

processes increases the chances of identifying logical conclusions or solutions. These processes are often manifested as questioning the world around us and the information we interact with. Indeed, Dwyer et al. (2014) posit that the value of questioning is that effective questioning allows the questioner to evaluate bias, identify oversights in arguments, and interrogate motives behind statements and ultimately evaluate or assess the information they engage with. According to Paul and Elder (2016), human beings do not retain the skill of questioning throughout their lives but must work to cultivate it, making it an important skill to teach in education.

The experts involved in contributing to the *Delphi Report* concluded that it may not be possible for any person to be an expert at all of the critical thinking processes, and that all people may find themselves more adept at critical thinking in some areas of their lives than others (Facione, 1990). This is an interesting contention when we consider how critical thinking may be taught, utilised, and measured in higher education. If a ‘pick n mix’ approach to critical thinking is allowed, it makes it difficult to measure and test students’ critical thinking. Indeed, this approach is in direct contention with the testing and standardisation approaches of formal education.

## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND CRITICAL THINKING

Within the various traditions of GCE, critical thinking is recognised as a key skill which needs to be developed. Critical thinking is considered a core tenet of GCE as it promotes considered reflection on, and questioning of issues from various perspectives and contexts. MacCallum (2014, cited in MacCallum et al., 2020, p. 162) considers global learning to be a “process of realised critical thinking” which allows for consideration of social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental issues from multiple perspectives.

Critical thinking has been conceptualised as a multidimensional construct which includes cognitive, dispositional, motivational, attitudinal, and metacognitive functions (Bensley & Spero, 2014; Wechsler et al., 2018). Bensley and Spero (2014) define metacognition as an awareness and control of one’s cognition, and they position this self-awareness as central to critical thinking, enabling learners to assess their knowledge and skill levels. This multidimensional approach is similar to the popular

‘head, heart and hands’ metaphor used within GCE (Sipos et al., 2008). This metaphor maintains that to engage with issues of global justice to bring about positive social change, we must engage with the three dimensions of ourselves in our cognitive disposition, and our emotional understandings and also engage in action by applying our knowledge to enable a transformative impact on the world around us. Thus, linking the cognitive approaches of critical thinking to the emotional motivation to think critically is crucial in ensuring the resultant knowledge which emerges can be used for social good and aid in solving new and emerging global problems.

The central goals of GCE are to learn to question stereotypes, and build skills to improve the world around us. These ideals would not be possible without placing critical thinking at its core. Indeed, Bourn (2015, p. 114) posits that learning in this field “by its very nature can be unsettling to the learner” as it very often prompts significant levels of self-reflection in terms of personal values, attitudes, and relationships with the wider world. Therefore, Bourn (2015, pp. 115–116) situates critical thinking as an essential element of his framework of DE and suggests that critical thinking in this context would include:

- Imagining a range of global perspectives—looking at topics and issues through different lenses;
- Looking critically at the images of other countries that are presented in the media and by other organisations such as NGOs;
- Challenging assumptions about ‘how people live’;
- Looking at the causes of inequalities;
- Exploring power relations—including questions such as who has power, who is voiceless, and who benefits?
- Exploring our own prejudices about poorer countries.

Furthermore, it is commonly cited that many of the issues that global learning is concerned with are contested and necessitate engagement in discussion and exploration of multiple perspectives to support a broader awareness of issues and challenge dominant discourses (Andreotti, 2006; Shah & Brown, 2010; Hunt, 2012). Shah and Brown (2010) propose including the development of critical thinking as a core pedagogical approach in GCE to address the typically challenging nature of many GCE topics. The contested nature of many GCE topics highlights the

importance of a focus on content knowledge as a precursor to critical thinking development to support counteracting stereotypes and consideration of issues from multiple perspectives in line with McPeck (1981). However, in contrast to the contention that critical thinking be subject-specific, the multidisciplinary nature of GCE necessitates the consideration of critical thinking as a cross-disciplinary skill. As an educational approach which is designed to be embedded across the breadth of curricular subjects without its own distinct curricular home, GCE is founded on the belief that skills such as critical thinking must be transferrable between subject areas to allow GCE learning to be used and applied in different contexts.

### *Beyond Critical Thinking—Considering Purpose and Impact*

Ultimately, the connection between critical thinking and global citizenship is the impact that developing and utilising critical thinking can have for the world around us. UNESCO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have identified critical thinking as a key skill necessary for future-proofed education, which prepares learners to live in the twenty-first century (Njiraini, 2016; Vincent-Lancrin et al., 2019). The purpose of critical thinking, promoted within the context of twenty-first-century skills, is to enable learners to have a constructive and positive influence in addressing evolving problems and enacting necessary change in responding to new and evolving challenges faced by communities globally (Luna Scott, 2015). However, the twenty-first-century skills framework is not focused on liberation from oppression or challenging hegemonic political and social structures as is the focus of GCE. It is instead focused on pre-empting and being able to respond to evolving challenges such as migration, changing markets, new technologies or transnational environmental and political challenges (Luna Scott, 2015), challenges central to GCE, but informed by a different values base.

Absent from many philosophical interpretations and theories of critical thinking outlined earlier in this chapter is the lived experience of the emancipatory impact critical thinking can have when used within education to question status quo structures with the aim of enabling the liberation of those who have found their educational and daily lives limited and damaged by oppression. bell hooks (2010) outlines how this impacted on her schooling and subsequent professional life. She (ibid) benefitted from educators who were willing to question and challenge

the hegemonic structures of patriarchy and racism. In outlining the transformation seen across the education system in the wake of the feminist revolution, hooks (2010, p. 94) outlines that bringing feminist perspectives into the classroom which challenge the previously dehumanising and oppressive status quo “affirmed the primacy of critical thinking, of linking education and social justice”. This post-structural critical pedagogy approach to including criticality in the classroom demonstrates the potential for critical thinking to be a catalyst for change by opening learners up to alternative ways of thinking and challenging hegemonic thinking. The opportunity to challenge the status quo and imagine alternative futures can have an emancipatory impact on those in society living through oppression, as was the case for bell hooks within her education.

Freire and hooks both write about the need for all of us as human beings, as citizens, to dare to transgress and disrupt. For both authors, they speak from a lived experience of oppression and a knowledge of, and belief in, the transformative potential of practising and living criticality. Discussing Freire’s influence on her work, hooks (1994) outlines their shared belief in critical thinking as the crucial initial stage of transformation in liberation struggles. She (ibid p. 47) talks about “that historical moment when one begins to think critically about the self and identity in relation to one’s political circumstance”. hooks (1994) outlines that people often underestimate the significance of changing your thinking and challenging attitudes previously considered indisputable. Although critical thinking does not by definition equate to social change, drawing on the work of critical pedagogues such as hooks, Freire, and Giroux, I present it here and in my teaching as a potential catalyst for change if accompanied by a focus on appropriate political, social, and cultural framings which challenge hegemonic discourses.

## CRITIQUES OF CRITICAL THINKING

Within a field that clearly values criticality and thus the questioning of concepts or orthodoxies presented as definitive, it is essential that critical thinking itself is critiqued. The following section examines multiple perspectives on a concept often presented as universal. As outlined by Torn Halves (2015 no page) “critical thinking regresses when it is framed uncritically as a mere tool”. As well as presenting considered critiques of critical thinking, I will also offer counterarguments where appropriate. Through personal reflection, review of literature and synthesis of both,

I have arrived at four main critiques of critical thinking which will be examined here, namely:

- (a) Critical thinking is ambiguous and could therefore be considered to be unteachable;
- (b) Critical thinking can devalue other ways of knowing;
- (c) Critical thinking is inherently values-neutral;
- (d) Critical thinking is counterproductive.

*Critical Thinking Is Ambiguous and Could Therefore Be Considered to Be Unteachable*

Critical thinking is not easily defined, and many distinct interpretations exist in different fields (see Atkinson, 1997; Martin, 2015). Atkinson (1997, p. 74) is dismissive of academics who, unable to define the term, take the concept of critical thinking on faith as “a sort of self-evident foundation of Western thought”. Additionally, Atkinson (1997, p. 72) conceptualises critical thinking as a “non-overt social practice” and expresses doubts as to the feasibility of teaching something which he views as “an organic part of the very culture that holds it up as an admirable achievement” and which he believes is “more at the level of common sense than a rational, transparent, and – especially- teachable set of behaviours”. Viewed from Atkinson’s perspective, critical thinking is a skill learned through socialisation within your community or household which would account for the varying levels of, and commitment to criticality displayed by people from different communities or households. If we are to accept Atkinson’s main argument, then critical thinking is a context-specific practice which is non-transferable across settings, which mirrors McPeck (1981) and Lipman’s (1988) subject-specific approach, but contrasts with the foundational tenets of cross-disciplinary GCE.

Defined as a fixed concept expressed solely through verbal or written argument, critical thinking would be a relatively unambiguous teachable skill. However, if we challenge this rigid definition by accepting that intellect can be expressed in other ways such as imaginatively, affectively, or somatically then this increases the ambiguity of how to define, teach, and measure critical thinking (Alston, 2001). Alston (2001, p. 30) promotes the “opening up of boundaries between thinking/ feeling/ imagining/ acting”. When we expand the ways in which critical thinking

can be expressed, expressiveness becomes a central disposition for critical thinking and skills such as empathy and the ability to imagine alternative futures become central dispositions of an active critical thinker (Alston, 2001). Conceptualised in this way, critical thinking holds the potential to have a transformative impact. However, the challenge of teaching and measuring such an ambiguous concept is heightened when critical thinking is considered in this way rather than the rigid fixed nature it is sometimes presented as having.

Willingham (2008) defines a key problem with teaching critical thinking when it is framed as a skill which can be learned and applied across any situation. He (ibid) argues that thinking is intertwined with the need for content knowledge, and thus not easily transferable. As outlined previously, McPeck and Lipman are both advocates of subject-specific critical thinking skills. In acknowledging their arguments, Ennis (1989) recognises that an instinctive transfer of critical thinking dispositions and abilities from one setting to another is unlikely. He (ibid) maintains that transfer only becomes likely if learners are given the opportunity to practise their skills in a variety of settings and if their teaching has an explicit focus on the transfer of skills and the connections between various domains. In order to foster the continued ability to transfer critical thinking skills across domains it is essential therefore that learners are given the opportunity to engage with content knowledge within multiple domains and are encouraged to make explicit links between topics for themselves. This distinction is crucial in understanding how GCE can foster critical thinking through a focus on making connections within and between topics and subject areas.

In the argument that calls for a stronger focus on content knowledge transfer, what is forgotten is that in education our aim is to prepare learners for the 'real world' which is constantly changing and the future of which can only be unknown to us. Ultimately, we are preparing learners for the unknown as we cannot know how global society will truly be affected by climate change, how increased migration and secularism will transform our societies, how technology will influence people and so the best we can hope to do is equip learners with the skills to survive and thrive in a constantly changing and evolving world (Luna Scott, 2015). Critical thinking is a skill which holds the potential to teach people to apply their knowledge by developing and forming opinions in order to identify solutions to problems. Wagner (2009) of Harvard University

has identified critical thinking as the top skill needed to survive in a futures-oriented education.

As with many areas of life and education, the ideal is to strive for a balance. Freire (1970, p. 46) believes that “the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world”. Consequently, education for critical thinking needs to be attentive to the tensions between the transfer of subject-specific knowledge and time for developing criticality. Furthermore, Brown (2014) promotes “fair-minded critical thinking” to counter possible indoctrination within educational practices which present and favour only the viewpoints of the educators. This approach to critical thinking addresses the tension that exists between allowing learners the freedom to explore and express their own ideas and ensuring that rationality still prevails (Brown, 2014).

In light of the tensions presented here, it is crucial for GCE practice to be attentive to the balance between subject knowledge development and skill development. It is clear that as a cross-curricular field, GCE must include an explicit focus on identifying and understanding connections between subject areas and time spent applying disciplinary knowledge to real-world scenarios to support the development of critical thinking.

### *Critical Thinking Can Devalue Other Ways of Knowing*

Not alone is there a tension in the implications which arise through defining critical thinking but the presentation of critical thinking as a universal good or definitive way of approaching knowledge can give rise to additional tensions. Indeed, the isolated promotion of critical thinking may be viewed as the devaluation of other ways of knowing. Through a review of various definitions, Martin (2015) established that the common thread of peoples’ interpretation of critical thinking was that it involves objectivity and the application of reason with a focus on data and evidence similar to the scientific method. As a logic-based thought process, it could be viewed as a ‘hard’ approach to knowledge which does not consider ‘soft’ ways of knowing the world such as intuition, instinct, experience, and feelings, also referred to as an ‘embodied way of knowing’ (Barbour, 2016). These ‘soft’ ways of knowing have served humanity for generations. Phenomenologist, Merleau-Ponty (1964) argued that these forms of knowing through embodiment and not simply relying on the mind are

key in understanding and experiencing the world. Furthermore, Palmer (1987) maintains that the hard approaches to knowledge such as criticality and our ability to engage in dialogue and debate are necessarily dependent on soft virtues. He (ibid) equates soft virtues with community and asserts that without community we are left with competitive individualism which only encourages silence and squashes interaction. Likewise, the importance of collective action and solidarity are central values within GCE which places a strong emphasis on community to enact change and counteract the hyper-individualism promoted by neoliberal and capitalist systems.

Additionally, Vaidya (2017) defines the ‘meta-critical question’ about critical thinking and asks us to consider whether critical thinking, as it is generally understood, is insensitive to race, class, gender, and non-Western traditions. Vaidya (2017) uses the example of the Nyāya School of classical Indian philosophy concerning the nature of argumentation to show how non-Western traditions can enhance our understanding of critical thinking. Using an example from Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, Vaidya (2017) explains how meditation is used as a tool of critical thinking that focuses on supporting the development of critical self-understanding. Vaidya (2017) similarly highlights comparisons that could equally be made between Western critical thinking and Africana, Arabic, Jaina, and Jewish philosophy. Indeed, Bali (2015) also argues that critical thinking is not an exclusively Western notion, but is ingrained in many cultures throughout the world. Where the challenge arises is how critical thinking is conceptualised and taught in light of cultural differences.

Drawing on her knowledge of multiple perspectives on knowledge from traditions around the world, Linker (2015) asserts that Western philosophy and conceptualisations of critical thinking often contrast reason with emotion despite that fact that the symbiosis of reason and emotion can be aligned with other dualities such as mind and body or good and evil that are deeply embedded in our collective conceptual history. The positioning of emotion as diametrically opposite of reason has enabled the justification of oppression across history (Linker, 2015). Historically people of colour and women were often presented as hysterical or dangerously angry in order to rationalise their subjugation (Linker, 2015). Contrastingly emotional intelligence is crucial to human flourishing. When we readjust our conceptualisation of critical thinking to include an understanding of the ways in which emotion and thought are

intertwined, we open up possibilities for human progress denied to us when critical thinking is positioned solely as detached from emotion.

Critical thinking is often positioned within philosophical traditions as objective, analytical, and consequently detached from other more embodied forms of knowledge. Galotti et al. (1999) position critical thinking as a form of separate knowing and, claim that separate knowers attempt to ‘rigorously exclude’ their personal feelings and beliefs when assessing new ideas or knowledge. The diametrical opposite of this form of knowing is connected knowing, which embraces empathy and connection and involves the knower attempting to understand an issue from another person’s point of view rather than simply evaluating their thoughts and opinions as a separate knower would. In this way, connected knowing is similar to embodied knowing (Barbour, 2016). Embodied or connected knowing is often considered feminine or soft, forms of knowledge that have historically and consistently been devalued in society.

In a similar vein, Alston (2001, p. 36) outlines the way in which we generate our opinions outlining that “opinions are not the product of disembodied understanding. Neither are they produced outside of rational processes. Instead, opinion is the rational response to undergoing conscious and unconscious experience”. Alston (2001, p. 36) situates opinion as “both a form of knowing and as a result of situatedness”. It could be argued that an overemphasis on logic as a way of knowing could limit our ability to understand and experience the world. Finding balance between traditionally Western hard approaches to critical thinking with alternative experiential softer forms of knowledge could be the key to equipping people with the skills to impact on their surroundings in a meaningful way.

Critiques which emphasise a divide between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ forms of knowing, as seen in separate knowing versus connected knowing or logical analysis versus embodied knowing, can be situated within the broader discourse of patriarchy and the differing values placed on masculine and feminine traits. The patriarchy is a social power system which places men in positions of power. This system is manifested within many areas of life from families and communities to institutions like the military, religion, and the state. Patriarchal systems uphold masculinity as superior, devaluing traits considered to be feminine (Ortner, 2022). One significant danger this division gives rise to for people of all genders and society as a whole is it restricts our ability to learn, experience, and act in the world by prioritising one approach to knowledge over another.

Despite the critiques laid out here, the approach to critical thinking promoted by many critical pedagogues is deliberately attentive to framings such as culture and gender and promotes their inclusion in our conceptualisations of critical thinking. hooks (2010) details how the inclusion of gender and racial framings in education enabled the interrogation of biases which ultimately led to desegregation movements. Indeed, critical GCE necessitates an awareness, interrogation, and adoption of these framings alongside historical and political framing (Andreotti, 2006).

### *Critical Thinking Is Inherently Values-Neutral*

As outlined above, critical thinking has the potential to influence transformative social change, but this is not a given. Although many authors (see Brookfield, 1995 for discussion) in their writing about critical thinking make connections with social change, liberation and emancipation are not necessary outcomes of critical thinking. Linskens (2010) assert that while critical thinking is concerned with identifying falsehoods in ideas, it is not innately concerned with rectifying the consequences of these falsehoods. Indeed, Noddings and Brooks (2017, p. 32) remind us that critical thinking is not inherently “a moral good”. Furthermore, Martin (2015, p. 251) defines the Western tradition of critical thinking as having an emphasis on “data, evidence and information”, a ‘hard’ approach to knowledge. The danger with this model of critical thinking is that it could be perceived as a-moral as there is no requirement within this conceptualisation for critical thinking to contribute to the greater good of society if it is solely concerned with data and evidence and does not have an inherent moral component.

Critical thinking is characterised by the desire to question concepts, theories, and knowledge and the commitment to examining multiple viewpoints when learning (Paul & Elder, 2016). The critical thinker is then expected to decide on their values and opinions or the right or wrong solution to a situation based on their critical approach to it (Bok, 2006; Dwyer et al., 2014). One follows the other rather than values informing the critical thinking process initially, or indeed being intertwined within this process. The potential danger in the promotion of critical thinking in isolation from values-based literacy is that the critical thinker is open to deciding on a racist, sexist, or homophobic view of the world as their concept of what is right. You can follow a critical thinking

process and still end up in a problematic conclusion which contradicts the values of GCE.

Significantly, Hayes (2014) argues that critical thinking is often a misrepresentation of indoctrination as he (ibid) believes that courses claiming to teach critical thinking are often used as a means for promoting political aims and indoctrinating students into the ‘correct ideas’. Indeed, this has also been a critique of GCE; that it promotes liberal interpretations or views of the world at the exclusion of other perspectives (Standish, 2012). Copp (2016) presents indoctrination as diametrically opposed to education, and outlines how claims that teaching some controversial topics is indoctrinatory are unfounded. He (Ibid.) argues that certain controversial issues, such as evolution, which are well supported and widely accepted by people who have honestly and thoroughly reviewed the evidence in the area, are not indoctrinatory to teach. Accepting Copp’s theory would therefore mean that there are certain concepts or values which could ethically be promoted alongside the development of critical thinking without being indoctrinatory or being said to deny people the opportunity to develop their own beliefs and values. The key, according to Copp (2016), is to ensure the controversy surrounding the theories are also presented.

Despite the assertion that critical thinking is not in itself predicated on a particular set of morals or beliefs, Freirean theory holds that education which promotes critical thinking has a role to play in liberating people from oppression and bringing about social transformation (Freire, 1974). Similarly, many models of education which have social change within their set of core aims are predicated on the principals of critical thinking. In consultation with key stakeholders such as educators, NGOs, and learners, Children in Crossfire (2017) identified that the development of critical thinking alongside emotional development was key for learners to be able to take part in society and to apply their knowledge to bring about global justice. It is crucial therefore to ensure that a balance is struck between exposing learners to a wide range of contradictory viewpoints and potentially establishing discriminatory viewpoints and indoctrination into a set of ‘correct’ viewpoints or values, which may deny them the opportunity to develop their criticality. Finding a way to integrate critical thinking development with values development simultaneously seems like the key to neutralising the potential harm from the values-neutral nature of critical thinking.

Therefore, it is clear that although critical thinking in and of itself can be said to be values-neutral, it is the values of the setting in which it is being promoted and those of the facilitator or teacher involved which will determine how it is approached. While critical thinking has been falsely used as a cover for biased instruction, focused on only one perspective, true critical thinking must account for a multiplicity of viewpoints while adhering to rationality (Gallant, 2008; hooks, 2010). Pollard (2018) promotes an approach to critical thinking that would have us embrace discomfort. He (ibid) argues that having a belief in fundamental values does not necessitate that everyone share the same political views. This approach to critical thinking in education requires educators and learners to be prepared and willing to listen to viewpoints which they may find uncomfortable, but which can still be considered rational and coherent.

Within the field of GCE critical thinking does not exist in isolation but instead is fostered alongside the development of empathy and the promotion of values seen as universally good such as equity, human rights, and social justice (Bourn, 2020). This combination of values-based learning and critical thinking is evidenced in McCloskey's (2017, p. 165) claim that "development education is not a neutral process but rather, it consciously and consistently sides with those who are marginalised and disempowered". This educational field is therefore never values-neutral but combines classical critical thinking with the promotion of specific values.

### *Critical Thinking Is Counterproductive*

Finally, a common critique of critical thinking is the distraction it can cause. Critical thinking can be counterproductive to goals of change and decision making due to its focus on questioning and exploring ideas and thoughts without a set time limit. It is commonly accepted that critical thinking is intrinsically linked with problem solving; both are presented side by side in much of the discourse around twenty-first-century skills (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009; Luna Scott, 2015). An overemphasis on criticality, however, can serve to alienate people and sabotage attempts to problem-solve and could be considered to be counterproductive in a society looking for solutions. Only focusing on critiquing and finding holes in an issue or problem does not necessarily help to generate solutions and can slow down change and action. Roth (2010) argues that focusing entirely on critiquing a topic and being solely negative deprives

learners of the opportunity to learn from what they are studying and to find and generate meaningful solutions based on information garnered from experience along with content knowledge. Indeed, this echoes Barbour's (2016) call to ensure we do not abandon 'soft' ways of knowing the world in our pursuit of critical thinking, but ensure the two are connected.

Many participants in Moore's (2013, p. 513) study mirrored a concern that a focus on critical thinking can often hamper the production of new ideas or the generation of solutions. While supportive of and actively promoting critical thinking in their practices, the academics who participated in the study cited concerns that often a focus on critical thinking can result in people tending to focus predominantly on critiquing ideas, poking holes, or being 'excessively negative' (ibid). They maintained a need instead for teaching to support learners to make connections between different ideas, concepts, and sources explored rather than encouraging them to solely focus on evaluating and critiquing ideas or texts (ibid). Equally, Roth (2010) asserts that although many people may be skilled critical thinkers, this can often serve to hurt or damage others and isolate people. Indeed, Zelnick (2008) argues that critical thinking often manifests itself as hostility towards institutions and culture. If critical thinking presents itself as harsh or focuses on points scoring, it has the potential to alienate others rather than encouraging them to think and consider their own perspective while learning as much as possible. A harsh or apparently judgemental critical thinker can therefore discourage others from becoming critical thinkers and instead incentivise them to adopt an apathetic approach.

The discussion in relation to content knowledge, and the transferability of skills outlined earlier in this chapter also feeds into the idea that critical thinking could become counterproductive. Indeed, Standish (2012) argues that a focus on the elements of global learning, such as critical thinking, has led to a reduction in content knowledge. However, the reduction of knowledge transfer is counter-intuitive to the goals of critical thinking. As subject-specific knowledge is essential for thinking within a given domain, consequently the more a person knows, the more critical they have the potential to be. However, people can also tend towards apathy as a result of over-exposure to difficult or harsh realities. Once you are exposed to the reality and scale of the global issues facing humanity today it is easy to shy away from such issues and wish to bury your head in the sand (Shah & Brown, 2010), consequently counteracting the goal

of critical thinking in the context of GCE; to work towards solutions and action for a more just and peaceful world.

Accordingly, the fostering of critical thinking must be accompanied by compassionate support for those being exposed to the harsh realities of inequality and oppression. Boler's (1999, p. 176) *Pedagogy of Discomfort* encourages us to begin to become comfortable in our discomfort and to "invite the other, with compassion and fortitude, to learn to see things differently, no matter how perilous the course for all involved". Significantly, Murphy et al., (2014, p. 52) maintain that "both emotional skills and critical thinking skills are mutually essential, and in fact it is only by cultivating a symbiosis between these, can pedagogy be developed that presents a true transformational agency to people".

## CONCLUSION

Despite the critiques outlined in this chapter, it remains my assertion that critical thinking is overwhelmingly an important and crucial component of not just GCE, but all facets of education. Critical thinking holds the potential to equip people with the skills to challenge and question dominant and harmful narratives and misinformation and is the foundational skill necessary to work towards social change. Without the skills inherent within critical thinking, such as analysis, questioning, inference, or the ability to review and critique new information, it would not be possible to build sustainable and effective solutions which are mindful of the extent of the global challenges we face.

This chapter has focused on critiques of critical thinking to ensure that our conceptualisation of critical thinking is nuanced and mindful of the potential harm or pitfalls which may arise when we accept critical thinking as a universal good. We can be better prepared to mitigate against the challenges of definition or of becoming overly focused on critique when we understand the extent of these issues. Equally, when aware of the potential good which can arise when critical thinking is integrated with multiple ways of knowing the world and informed by a values-lens critical thinking practices may flourish beyond a basic skillset.

Conscious of these critiques, critical thinking in the context of GCE should include a conscious awareness of them and the choices made in how critical thinking is conceptualised, enacted, taught, and measured. Specifically, critical global learning should encourage learners to embrace discomfort, ensure a consistent focus on integrating multiple perspectives

and varied forms of knowledge development, allow for a values-lens to inform learning and criticality, and ensure that a balance is struck between knowledge growth and skill development.

The critiques outlined in this chapter have been pivotal in informing the conceptual framework for critical global learning which will be outlined in the coming chapters and which attempts to mitigate against all the challenges outlined here.

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## CHAPTER 3

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# Developing a Conceptual Framework for Critical Global Learning

## INTRODUCTION

A two-part conceptual framework for teaching critical global learning is the core contribution of this book. Chapters Four and Five will outline the components of the conceptual framework, namely the *Model for Teaching Critical Global Learning* in Chapter Four and the *Planning Tool for Implementing Critical Global Learning* in Chapter Five. This chapter addresses the process of developing a conceptual framework including the rationale for its creation, the challenges it responds to, and the steps taken in its development. While the conceptual framework should provide a useful starting point for educators in a variety of settings, it was designed for a specific context and at a specific time and so will also benefit from adaptation for use in other contexts. Consequently, I hope that by understanding the process involved in developing a framework, others may be better equipped to adapt this framework or create their own in light of what they learn from it.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework presented in this book provides a structure to support the teaching of critical global learning. It brings together a wide variety of literature in a cohesive and accessible manner to ensure that the knowledge it is based upon can be practically applied in practice.

This is the core purpose of the conceptual framework, not to reinvent the wheel or present an entirely new and unseen approach to critical thinking development or GCE, but to cohesively and accessibly bring together research-informed strategies, and best practice in a way which is manageable to implement in the classroom. There were a number of key factors which were the catalyst for developing the conceptual framework in this book:

Firstly, the conceptual framework responds to the challenges of teaching and planning for critical thinking in the classroom. The literature on critical thinking provides an overabundance of strategies and approaches for teaching critical thinking in different settings. The wide variety of approaches in literature can be overwhelming to engage with as an educator, meaning that it can be challenging to distil down the most important aspects of critical thinking instruction and choose an approach which will work in your own context. Additionally, these approaches can often be contradictory, with different authors strongly advocating for approaches that are in conflict with those promoted by others. This presents a challenge for educators interested in promoting critical thinking development in the classrooms but unsure what approach to take. The conceptual framework presented in this book was developed to respond to these challenges. I was struggling to know what was the best approach to take in my setting and how to best integrate critical thinking teaching approaches with GCE. Consequently, I developed the two-part conceptual framework to reflect the most important aspects of both GCE and critical thinking by focusing on the ways in which they are interconnected. I made choices around the approaches that I found worked best in my practice and reflected these in the framework. Choices were informed by an in-depth literature review, action research in the classroom, and ongoing professional discussions with colleagues to learn what was working or not in their own classrooms. The conceptual framework has removed the sense of overwhelm which underpinned approaching critical thinking instruction for me in the past by providing a structured, reliable, and research-informed approach which I know will be effective in my setting and which reflects best practice.

Secondly, the conceptual framework has supported me to respond to some of the difficulties associated with large group and large cohort teaching. It is extremely challenging to provide high quality education to large cohorts. In particular, critical thinking development requires a supported approach with time for dialogue and independent reflection.

The level of reflexivity needed for critical thinking development can be very difficult to facilitate within large groups. Students can find it challenging to be open and honest within larger groups, and as a teacher it is challenging to provide individualised responses and support that many students need when there are large numbers in the class. While it is not possible to entirely mitigate against these challenges, the conceptual framework helps by ensuring that the pedagogy employed in each session supports students to feel at ease in the classroom, and provides multiple varied opportunities for them to engage and share their ideas. As a teacher, the conceptual framework provides a safety net to ensure that teaching is in line with established and research-informed best practice in the area.

Thirdly, the conceptual framework responds to the difficulty of supporting the variety of student needs within and across groups. I work with large groups and cohorts which makes it close to impossible to provide individualised support to students regardless of the levels of need within groups. While some students come to higher education able to work independently and with a pre-disposition to be critical thinkers, the majority of students are more familiar with receiving personalised support which does not scaffold them to be independent or critical thinkers. While the conceptual framework does not magically make it possible to support more than four hundred students in an individualised way, it does take account of the variety of individualised needs that students may have and builds in approaches which support students to incrementally build their skill levels, leading to greater independence over time. This has been one of the biggest markers of success of the conceptual framework, to provide students with opportunities to become increasingly independent in the classroom in a way that is manageable for me as the teacher in the space. The conceptual framework provides the structure which makes this possible.

Fourthly, the nature of higher education poses a challenge in that there are often multiple lecturers working on the same module, delivering the same content but with different groups. It is essential that all groups receive equitable support and teaching regardless of the lecturer working with them. While a common approach is to simply work from the same presentations and have one set of notes, this does not account for the periphery aspects of teaching which include the messages and values we want to underpin our work. This is especially relevant when approaching lectures which include multiple open-ended or flexible tasks for students

to engage in, as is common when nurturing critical thinking development or engaging with GCE. Having one set of notes will not provide a sufficient scaffold to ensure all students receive the same messaging and style of support in different settings. Naming and agreeing on the learning goals is also not sufficient in this instance as they can often be interpreted in different ways. Having a clear, and shared, understanding of how these goals are intended to be operationalised however, ensures that multiple staff members can work collaboratively in different classes but modelling the same values, and using complimentary pedagogies. Having a conceptual framework which lays out not only the core teaching goals but also ensures there is a coherent approach to developing values and working on the classroom environment has supported me to work collaboratively and effectively with colleagues to ensure students are not receiving mixed messages in different groups.

Finally, using a conceptual framework to inform and shape my teaching ensures that I follow a structured approach in all sessions, regardless of the topic. Using a structured approach does not mean being repetitive or that all sessions look the same, but means that there are predictable components in all lessons. One of the core approaches that I have found to be successful in supporting students to become critical thinkers is to provide opportunities for them to practise their criticality in class in a supportive and safe environment. Prior to developing and using the conceptual framework, I would approach the planning of each session individually and could easily have an overemphasis on content within any one session, meaning that there were limited opportunities for my students to practise their criticality or apply and use the knowledge I was sharing with them. As my conceptual framework is grounded in key learning objectives which combine the core components of critical thinking with the values and objectives important within GCE, I can be confident that each session I plan using the conceptual framework as a guide will be in line with these goals. Without the framework, it was easy to end up off track and focus too heavily on knowledge and content which had a detrimental impact on skill development. The conceptual framework helps to ensure there is a good balance between both. Furthermore, the structured approach found within the Planning Tool, the second component of the conceptual framework, is helpful in making sessions relatively predictable for students. While they do not know exactly what activities they will do in class or what knowledge they will learn, they know that when they come to my classroom they are expected to engage with their learning,

they will have opportunities to share their ideas and opinions, and that these will be taken seriously.

## DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework was developed as part a three-year self-study action research project. The two parts were developed separately and refined incrementally in response to using them in my practice. The first component of the conceptual framework is a *Model for Teaching Critical Global Learning* (hereafter called the Model). The Model was originally designed to identify the key critical global learning skills I needed to focus on in my teaching, as well as the key considerations I should be cognisant of in my practice. It was adapted multiple times as my understanding of critical global learning and my practice grew and evolved. At all times, I aimed to ensure this Model responded to the critiques of and challenges faced by both critical thinking and GCE by aiming to mitigate against them where possible. The second component of the conceptual framework is *the Planning Tool for Implementing Critical Global Learning* (hereafter called the Planning Tool). This Planning Tool was designed to support the implementation of the Model. While the Model includes the core skills which need to be focused on in the classroom, and the considerations which must be attended to, it does not work as an implementation tool, missing the nuance of how to apply the Model to practise in the classroom.

From a theoretical perspective, I drew particularly on Freire's (1974) Critical Consciousness, Boler's (1999) Pedagogy of Discomfort, and Bourn's (2015) Pedagogy of Development Education when designing the conceptual framework. The components of the conceptual framework draw on these perspectives to offer an interactive approach to teaching which is focused on dialogue, modelling skills and attitudes, sharing challenging content knowledge, and supporting students to engage with and reflect on their learning. To support the development of 'critical consciousness' Freire (1974) promotes an emancipatory approach to education which focuses on raising learners' critical capacity. Furthermore, Boler's (1999, p. 176) 'pedagogy of discomfort' which she describes as "both an invitation to inquiry as well as a call to action" echoes Freire's ambitions for education. The pedagogy of Development Education developed by Bourn (2015) further echoes the learning from critical consciousness and pedagogy of discomfort through a focus on debating

while drawing on personal experiences and wider social and cultural influences.

## THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK

The primary purpose of developing the Model, the first component of the framework, was to guide and inform my teaching. I identified a set of skills against which I could evaluate the success of my teaching. Through reviewing literature, engaging in professional critical conversations with colleagues, and reflecting on my work with my students, I identified four key skills with a set of sub-skills within them. The starting point for the Model was a publication by Shah and Brown (2010), which detailed six considerations for including critical thinking within the context of global learning. I expanded on their considerations to develop a set of nine skills that presented the desired outcomes for critical global learners. By the conclusion of the project these were rearranged into four key skills with several sub-skills. This skillset informed my data collection and teaching focus when working with students over three action research cycles.

The skillset I identified and employed in my teaching, data collection, and analysis represented a framework, or an organised collection of ideas. However, in response to my experience of using the framework of skills in my teaching, I began to consider my classroom as a system not only focused on outcomes, but also dependent on the factors which impact students' acquisition of the skills I had identified. When reflecting the skills in the context of a system, I introduced factors that impact how students develop the framework of skills I was working with. While I originally visualised these considerations separately from the skillset, through the process of moving from a framework of skills to a Model to support the holistic implementation of critical global learning, they became an integrated entity. In this way, the Model moves beyond the initial framework I used as an organisational tool to guide my planning, to a structure that is considerate of the holistic experience of teaching and the open system within the classroom. The final Model provides a conceptualisation of the complete process of teaching critical global learning that goes beyond just the desired outcomes for students and is considerate of the varied factors which impact students learning.

After using the ever-evolving Model to guide my teaching and research for two academic years, and two cycles of action research, I began to

develop the second component of the conceptual framework, the Planning Tool, which is used to support the implementation of the Model. I sought to create a structured approach to teaching critical global learning that would enable me to address the challenges I encountered during the first two years of using the Model on its own, while retaining a consistent focus on student's learning, and the components of the Model. In combination, the Model and the Planning Tool create a conceptual framework which informs our understanding of, and provides an approach to teaching critical global learning within initial teacher education. My aim when developing the Planning Tool was to provide a systematic approach to my teaching which would offer space and opportunity to students to learn and to develop critical thinking skills, while honouring students' voices, experiences, and opinions without compromising the core values of the Model, namely: global social justice, equity, and human rights.

During the first two years of using the Model on its own, students were given opportunities to identify when they noticed a change in their own criticality and what they believed led to this change. I found it notable that many students named particular sessions as the catalyst for their personal change, whereas others indicated that they noticed change either at the outset of the module or closer to the end. This led me to conclude that different sessions or topics will pique different students' interests, and that students will need varying lengths of time to develop their interest and commitment levels. For this reason, I wanted to ensure that all sessions included opportunities for students to develop the variety of skills and dispositions that I hoped to cultivate, as it was clear that student engagement levels varied from session to session depending on their interest in the topic at hand. By developing a structured approach to be implemented across the full module, I was reassured that there would be consistency for students and that other teacher educators working with different groups would also be balancing content, skills, and values within each lesson according to the Planning Tool.

The components of the Planning Tool will be outlined fully in Chapter Five, however it includes four lesson elements, three pre-conditions for learning, as well as a focus on three types of outcomes. The conditions for learning and the outcomes reflect the considerations for teaching present within the Model, but with a more practical focus on how to implement them rather than a more theoretical consideration of their significance to critical global learning. The lesson elements are a consolidation of best practice in critical thinking instruction from literature and the key

skills identified in the Model while simultaneously being grounded in a conceptual framework often used to inform GCE work. The resulting Planning Tool is a practical and flexible approach to inform preparation for teaching critical global learning while being sure that you will focus on the most important aspects of both critical thinking instruction and the core components of GCE.

## A NOTE ON THE METHODOLOGY USED

As mentioned, the conceptual framework represents the core outcomes of a self-study action research project which took place across three academic years. I was motivated by a desire to improve my practice and learn how best to support my students to become critical global learners. Prior to engaging in this research project, I had been teaching GCE, and trying to focus on critical thinking development for two years. I found that at the end of my modules, students would often express how much they enjoyed the module and how they felt they had transformed not only their knowledge base but their skill levels, they would often self-identify as critical thinkers. However, I rarely saw this skill level reflected in their assignments or what I experienced in their contributions during class time. I therefore undertook this research to examine the gap between my students perceived skill level and their demonstrated skill levels. I believed that my teaching practices must be the key factor which could either support or hinder their critical thinking skills, and so I undertook a self-study approach in order to come to a better knowledge of my own practices, and identify where I could make changes to close the gap between students perceived and demonstrated skill levels.

Self-study research places the researcher at the centre of the phenomenon being explored (Samaras, 2011). While the motivation for engaging in self-study research related to my students' learning outcomes and I involved them in data collection, it was important to retain a research focus on observing and reflecting on my own teaching, rather than simply studying my students. As highlighted by Roche (2016, p. 29) "my pupils could be the mirror in which I saw my practise reflected, but I needed to see that I was researching 'me': my thoughts, my ideas, my solutions to problems, my actions, decisions and plans". Samaras (2011) positions the self-study teacher researcher as the 'generator of knowledge', highlighting the significance of being able to improve and change our own practices.

Self-study action research is adopted by practitioners interested in studying their own practice with the aim of improving their practice, their understanding of it, and sharing research outcomes. Engaging in self-study research is a form of professional development for educators. Samaras (2011) positions this work as a lifelong process, reminding us that as educators we can engage our skills in questioning, reflecting, and ultimately acting to improve our practices. As a research process, self-study enabled me to identify what was working well within my practice and where there were opportunities for further exploration. Rather than shying away from problems in your practice, self-study allows you to openly ask questions and embark on a process of discovery to identify solutions (Samaras, 2011). Self-study enables us to generate knowledge and theory about the broader field of teaching based on our lived experiences. Loughran (2008) posits that educators' knowledge is a crucial source for improving teaching practices, and highlights that this knowledge base is largely untapped. Roche (2016, p. 29) said the process of self-study action research is much less linear than other research approaches, and compared it at times to "nailing jelly to a tree". Ultimately, though challenging, this approach enables teacher researchers to "create living personal theories that have current relevance" (McDonagh, 2020, p. 135).

The main participants in this study were B.Ed. students in the second year of their degrees. Data was collected during a core module, namely social studies, which consisted of the three subject areas of pedagogy of history, pedagogy of geography, and GCE. Students received lectures in groups of roughly sixty within this module, and these sessions were repeated seven times due to the large size of the cohort. During the first action research cycle, just one of the seven groups took part in the study, during cycles two and three there were two groups who participated. Students were invited to participate and data was collected only from those who had given both written and verbal consent to participate. Table 3.1 details the structure of each cycle along with participant numbers and relevant module-related details.

During the first cycle of action research, I taught as I had done in previous years and focused on observing and developing my reflexivity as an educator to identify what was working well and where there were opportunities for improvement. Data from cycle one was analysed using the framework of skills I had developed for the Model. Using emerging findings from cycle one alongside the critical thinking skills from the

**Table 3.1** Details of action research cycles

|                          | <i>Cycle 1</i>   | <i>Cycle 2</i>   | <i>Cycle 3</i>  |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|
| When?                    | Spring semester 2018<br>(half an academic year)  | Autumn semester 2018 and<br>Spring semester 2019 (full<br>academic year)   | Autumn<br>semester 2019<br>(half an<br>academic year) |
| Duration                 | 12 weeks   | 12 weeks in Autumn plus<br>10 weeks in Spring  | 12 weeks  |
| No. of<br>modules        | 1 module   | 2 modules  | 1 module  |
| Frequency of<br>lectures | 2 lectures per week  | 1 lecture per week   | 1 lecture per<br>week                                 |
| Participants             | 1 group of 47 students   | 2 groups of 51 and 59<br>students respectively   | 2 groups of<br>44 and 45<br>students<br>respectively  |
| Module focus             | Joint focus on exploring<br>global justice topics and<br>learning how to teach<br>GCE in the primary<br>school classroom | Joint focus on exploring<br>global justice topics (in the<br>Autumn semester) and<br>learning how to teach GCE<br>in the primary school<br>classroom (in the Spring<br>semester) | Exploring<br>global justice<br>topics                 |

Model, I designed teaching interventions and made changes for cycle two, and then tweaked these again for cycle three in response to findings from cycle two. I made changes to my teaching style, to the classroom environment and I introduced new methodologies. I also began to look at more significant changes to the way in which I was addressing the balance between content delivery and active, engaged learning opportunities and skill development. Just as the literature review, and resultant skillset within the Model, shaped and informed my teaching and the interventions I designed, so too did the emerging findings from my research shape the structure of the Model and the eventual design of the Planning Tool.

### *Data Sources*

Samaras' (2011) conceptualisation of self-study necessitates engagement with colleagues and research participants, requiring the researcher to draw on sources of knowledge beyond themselves. Russell (2008, p. 5) highlights that it is “not the private and personal affair that the label might

suggest”. Rather, self-study is done in communication with colleagues and students (McDonagh et al., 2020; Russell, 2008; Samaras, 2011). While self-study legitimises the knowledge educators can generate based on their own practices, the knowledge generated through self-study research is as a result of consultation and critical conversations with colleagues (Russell, 2008). My inquiry into my own practices was not undertaken alone, but alongside support and engagement from critical friends, my students, and colleagues.

Consequently, data collection methods focused on illuminating my understanding of my practice through a focus on both self-reflection and data collection alongside participants such as critical friends and my students. The data set included both written and recorded personal reflections; recordings of conversations with critical friends; emails and written reflections from critical friends; recordings and notes from focus group interviews; surveys; Most Significant Change Stories (MSCSs); exit slips from classes; photographs of in class work; post-it notes or worksheets from in class work; and assessments. The wide variety of data types helped to capture the complex and messy nature of classroom practice and provided multiple sources to aid in triangulation of findings.

Data collection methods were chosen to help capture not only what was happening in practice, but to try and understand what was working or not in the classroom, and why that might have been so. While the research question, overall structure, and many of the data collection tools were designed by me, the approach taken allowed participants to choose the extent and level of their own engagement. The inputs from critical friends and student participants served to deepen my understanding of my practice and challenge my perceptions through offering insights that often challenged or contradicted my own.

The numbers of students involved in individual data collection methods varied based on students’ individual circumstances. While some data collection methods, such as surveys, MSCSs, and evidence from class work, were collected during class time, not all students within each group chose to contribute their class work as data, or chose to complete the surveys. Additionally, as focus group interviews took place outside of class time, participation from students was dependent on their interest in the research project and availability at the interview times. Although there was variety in terms of participant numbers in different methods, all students in each group took part in at least one method. The variety of data collection methods helped to capture not only what was happening

in the classroom but also included layers of interpretation through the multiple lenses of students sharing their own experiences and perspectives, my own reflections, and the considerations of critical friends who both observed me teaching and engaged in teaching the same materials themselves.

### ADAPTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY OF THE FRAMEWORK

Both components of the conceptual framework are designed to be flexible and adaptable as knowledge in the field develops and to facilitate their application in different contexts. Resultingly the conceptual framework presented within the next two chapters is offered as a starting point for other educators wishing to incorporate critical global learning into their practice in different contexts. It is my hope that the framework offers a structure against which others can assess their own practices in order to identify where their teaching approaches align with, or diverge from, the conceptualisation the Model offers, and consider how it could be adapted to support them. I did not design the conceptual framework to act as a complete or finished article, but as a malleable tool to be torn apart, added to, and applied.

It is commonly cited across literature that both GCE and the development of critical thinking skills should prepare learners to address future unpredictable challenges. Authors propose that education should first and foremost equip learners with the skills and dispositions to be able to be adaptable and responsive in the future. Just as critical global learning necessitates that learners, and indeed all citizens, become flexible, so too must this framework be adaptable in order to enable practitioners to use it in a responsive way into an unknowable future.

The study which informed this conceptual framework was small scale and context bound, consequently some of my findings, or some aspects of the conceptual framework I designed, may not be representative of the wider field. Sullivan et al. (2016) posit that rather than generalisability of results, self-study action research projects should demonstrate that they have significance for others. Through developing the Model and the Planning Tool which in combination offer a conceptual framework for teaching critical global learning, I endeavoured to take my lived experience as a teacher educator within my context and offer new approaches within the field that can be of use in different contexts. However, conscious that knowledge is not finite and that contexts can

vary and change, both the Model and the Planning Tool have been designed to be flexible and adaptable to respond to evolving knowledge and contexts.

I strongly recommend that practitioners interested in incorporating critical global learning into their practice play with and adapt the Model and the Planning Tool to fit their own settings and the wider context of the time in which it is being used. Both are informed by current literature and reflect the findings from this study and so are firmly grounded in research. However, they were purposefully designed to be adaptable rather than prescriptive. While I will offer an insight into how I implemented them within my practice and the specific strategies and methodologies I used, these were in response to my context, skill, and comfort levels. It would be of interest to investigate how they can be adapted for use in different contexts, such as different countries, different module descriptions, online learning, or with varying group sizes. Outcomes from further research may include additions or changes to the current configurations of the Model and the Planning Tool, which would serve to strengthen and build our understanding of critical global learning.

Some examples of the ways in which the Model and Planning Tool are flexible include:

- The core skills within the Model are open to different interpretations and applications, this includes how they are understood, but also how they are measured or tracked in the classroom;
- Different approaches to implementing the lesson elements. Chapter Five will illustrate a variety of approaches which can be employed to facilitate each lesson element, but the list is not exhaustive and some of the suggestions may not be appropriate for other settings;
- The way in which conditions for learning are supported will vary depending on what is relevant and appropriate in different contexts;
- The external influences which impact on the implementation of the framework will be context dependent and will evolve and change over time in response to societal changes;
- Additional components may be added in to any aspect of the conceptual framework, or indeed some components may be removed as appropriate.

This list demonstrates that while the framework is research informed, tested in practice, and robust in nature, it is not prescriptive. Each module that I work on and each time that I use it, I implement it in a slightly different way depending on what is appropriate to my context at that time. Equally, any practitioner using the framework will have their own interpretation of how best to use it. It is designed as a guide, to mitigate against the very real challenges of teaching critical global learning, and to reduce the feeling of overwhelm induced by abundant and often contradictory literature on how to best teach critical thinking and GCE.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has charted the process of developing the conceptual framework which will be outlined in more detail over the next two chapters. Crucially, the rationale for creating the conceptual framework demonstrates how it was designed in a responsive manner, with the aim of mitigating against the challenges inherent in teaching critical global learning and with the aim of improving and streamlining my own practice. While the processes outlined in this chapter were personal to me and to this particular conceptual framework, it is hoped that in sharing the steps of the journey, and my rationale for decisions made, it may offer others a window into the process of designing a conceptual framework. I found that there was no simple formula or guidebook for creating a conceptual framework, except to work through what was needed at each step along the way. In this manner, I was enabled to create a framework which is authentically responsive to my own practice, while being cognisant of the ways in which it may be of use to others.

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PART II

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A Conceptual Framework for Critical Global  
Learning



## CHAPTER 4

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# A Model for Teaching Critical Global Learning

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays out the first component of the conceptual framework which this book presents; the *Model for Teaching Critical Global Learning*. The purpose of the Model is to offer educators a conceptualisation of the overlaps between critical thinking and global citizenship education in a practical and visual format. As outlined in Chapter Three, this Model was developed through literature and its structure was refined following research. Consequently, this chapter will detail all components of the framework and offer comment on the purpose, origin, theoretical and conceptual foundations from the literature, and comment on its practical implementation.

## STRUCTURE OF THE MODEL

This Model explores the intersections between critical thinking and GCE and the consequent implications for teaching. As shown in Fig. 4.1, the Model consists of a commitment to criticality at its core and two arcs that move around it which detail the skillset necessary for critical global learners to develop and the factors that educators should consider when approaching the teaching of critical global learning.

The two arcs have arrows on either end to indicate that they are in motion, should their arcs be completed, they would overlap, representing

## Model for Teaching Critical Global Learning

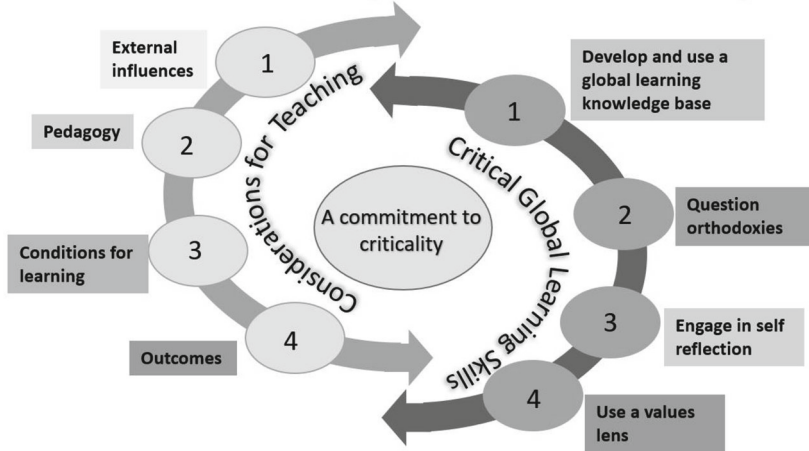


Fig. 4.1 Model for teaching critical global learning (Golden, 2022)

the ways in which they influence and impact each other. For example, students' development of the skillset on the right-hand arc is dependent upon the conditions for learning and the pedagogy fostered in the classroom, both elements of the left-hand arc. Additionally, as students build their skillset, pedagogy can be adapted in response. The left-hand arc also includes consideration of external factors which may support or hinder students' acquisition of the skills. Finally, the personal and societal outcomes included as considerations for teaching depend upon the extent and manner in which students develop and apply the skillset included in the Model. In rearranging the Model's components into the final visual representation, I was enabled to consider not just the core skills and considerations but also the sub-elements of each component. The complete Model, including all sub-elements, is visible in Fig. 4.2.

### CENTRAL COMMITMENT

At the centre of this model is a commitment to criticality which is presented as the crucial anchor necessary for students to become critical global learners and to develop and build on the skills included within this model. While students may develop some of the skills associated with

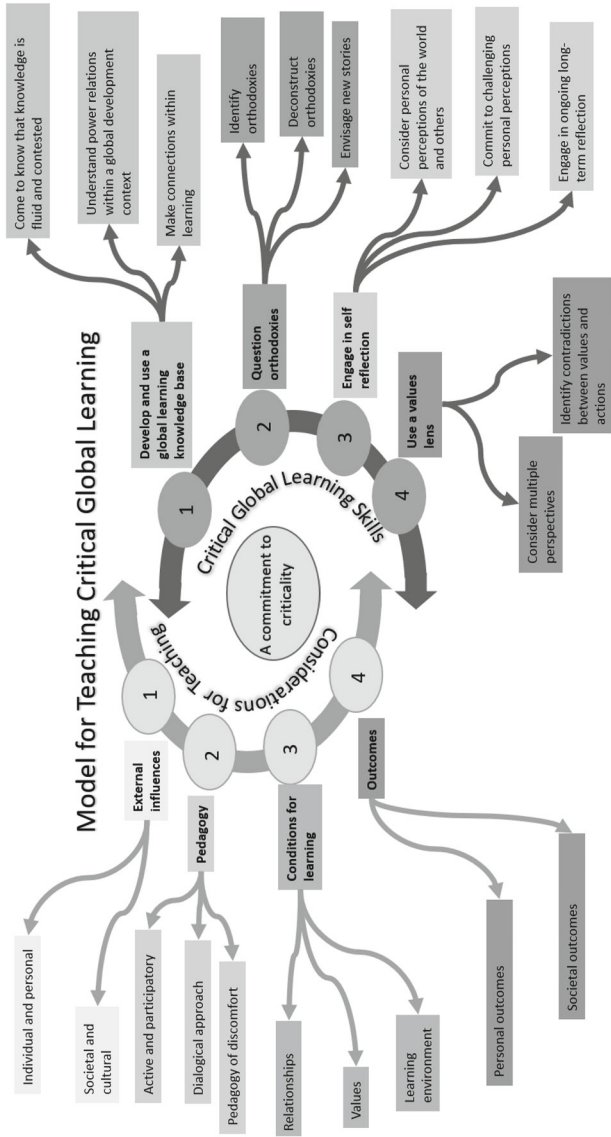


Fig. 4.2 Model for teaching critical global learning including sub-elements (Golden, 2022)

critical thinking through participation in higher education, their focus in developing these skills is often linked to performance in assessments rather than personal growth. It is my contention that without a personal commitment to criticality it is less likely that students would continue to practise their criticality skills beyond the classroom in their personal and professional lives.

The contention that the development and implementation of critical thinking skills is inseparably linked to a commitment to criticality is supported by critical thinking theorists. Paul and Elder (1997) propose a staged progression of critical thinking development through which learners must pass as their critical thinking skills develop. In their proposition of a staged development of critical thinking, Paul and Elder (1997, p. 34) also posit that “passage from one stage to the next is dependent upon a necessary level of commitment on the part of an individual to develop as a critical thinker, is not automatic, and is unlikely to take place subconsciously”. Their proposition highlights the role that autonomy plays in developing critical thinking skills. While teachers can explicitly teach the skills and promote criticality, taking Paul and Elder’s position, student interest and commitment levels are the determining factor in their progression to an independent critical thinker disposed to continually using their critical thinking skills beyond the classroom.

## RIGHT-HAND ARC: SKILLS

Within this Model, the right-hand arc is dedicated to the skills which critical global learners need to develop. In the following sections I will outline what each skill entails, their purpose, and the sub-skills included within each of the core skills. As will be evident, many of the skills and dispositions have overlapping and interconnected foci and draw on similar conceptualisations and challenges presented by the fields of GCE and critical thinking.

### *Skill 1: Develop and Use a Global Learning Knowledge Base*

The first skill within the model is to develop and use a knowledge base. Bailin et al. (1999, p. 290) assert that the quality of critical thinking a person can engage in is dependent upon what they know about the topic being explored. Fundamentally, without sufficient content knowledge, it is not possible to engage in authentic critical thinking about a topic. As

outlined by Bailin et al. (1999, p. 290) “critical thinking always takes place in the context (and against the backdrop) of already existing concepts, beliefs, values, and ways of acting”. Subsequently, as our thinking is a product of our knowledge and experiences, insufficient knowledge in an area limits a person’s ability to critically explore the topic.

Furthermore, focusing on developing and extending students content knowledge is a mitigation strategy against the challenges presented by critical thinking in that it could become counterproductive if overly focused on critique, as outlined in Chapter Two. Indeed Roth (2010) promotes a focus on knowledge development to support the generation of meaningful solutions to global challenges. Knowledge development is not only crucial in addressing potential downfalls of critical thinking but is also emphasised as a core element in many definitions of GCE and its constituent educational approaches.

It is hoped that following teaching guided by this model, students should be able to demonstrate an expanded knowledge base in their discussions, making use of information they have engaged with to support their arguments. Additionally, it is expected that students will have accessed and made use of information about GCE topics outside of the classroom due to an encouragement to engage with a multiplicity of perspectives on a topic. A focus on knowledge development should support students to continually challenge and update their own knowledge base.

In the process of developing and using a knowledge base, there are additional sub-skills which support developing this skill: to come to know that knowledge is fluid and contested, the ability to understand power relations within a global development context, and the capacity to make connections within learning.

*Skill 1, Sub-Skill 1: Come to Know That Knowledge Is Fluid and Contested*

The fields of GCE and critical thinking are both defined by their shared curiosity and commitment to unravelling the varied array of perspectives and experiences on a topic. As a result of focusing on the contested nature of information, students should come to understand that knowledge is not a fixed state but needs constant evaluation as they engage with new perspectives and experiences.

GCE is concerned with controversial and contested topics which do not have simple or universal explanations (Andreotti, 2006; Hunt, 2012;

Shah & Brown, 2010,). Hunt (2012) tasks learners with embracing this ambiguity and becoming comfortable with a multiplicity of viewpoints as a means of challenging stereotypes. Additionally, a cornerstone of critical thinking is the ability to reflect on and question knowledge. A key outcome for critical thinkers is the ability to form personal understandings of contested concepts (Dwyer et al., 2014; Ennis, 1989). Critical thinkers should be able to move and shift their understandings in response to new experiences or evolving knowledge (hooks, 2010, Luna Scott, 2015). Shah and Brown (2010) contend that students should have the opportunity to engage in debates to enable them to evaluate for themselves the relative merits of contested opinions.

*Skill 1, Sub-Skill 2: Understand Power Structures Within an International Development Context*

GCE is concerned with learning about the world and how it works both socially and politically, and critical thinking is focused on enabling people to listen to multiple viewpoints, ask pertinent questions, and analyse their beliefs and ideas. Just as GCE topics are complex and contested, so too are they political. Shah and Brown (2010, p. 38) contend that all education is political as everything has “an ideological and political underpinning and is shaped by patterns of power distribution”. Furthermore, they (ibid) promote viewing the world through a political lens which can support the evolution of a charitable view of other countries towards a critical examination of the structures that shape and influence global challenges and our knowledge of them. Consequently, awareness of power structures which influence inequality has been identified as core knowledge necessary for critical global learners to develop their awareness of the world. Gallant (2008) posits that it is in coming to understand power structures and their influence in the world that we can begin to resist and challenge them.

Some authors link power inextricably with discourse (Gallant, 2008; Youdell, 2006). Youdell (2006, p. 35) highlights that by accepting that power structures are both a product and effect of dominant discourses we can better understand how this makes some practices likely and others all but impossible given societies collective beliefs of how power is wielded and by whom. Furthermore, Gallant (2008, p. 246) maintains that by acknowledging that power is established and advanced through dominant discourses we must also accept that it can therefore be changed through “identifying, analysing and redefining the discourses”. Hence, society

and individuals have significant power in reshaping power differentials, and the role of critical questioning in coming to understand and deconstruct systems which create and perpetuate these differentials is crucial in addressing inequality.

In their development of this skill, students should expect to be able to highlight the influences of power structures in relation to GCE topics. Through modelling and explicit teaching, students should begin to include power structures as a frame with which to demonstrate their evolving understanding and viewpoints of a variety of different issues. To support this reflection, there is an onus on teachers to make students aware of the complex structures which influence human and societal development and model engagement with critical questions of power, encouraging students to ask their own critical questions.

*Skill 1, Sub-Skill 3: Make Connections Within Learning*

There are many ways that connections within learning can be made to deepen knowledge development. Hicks (2008) highlights two such connections in the spatial and temporal dimensions of education. He posits that students must learn about both the temporal interrelationships between the past, present, and future and also the spatial interrelationships between the local, national, and global. These spatial and temporal interrelationships are echoed in many definitions of GCE and each of its constituent educational approaches. Hicks (2008, p. 116) recommends that students explore the intergenerational links between past, present, and future to support the development of a sense of continuity and change and ultimately a responsibility for the future.

Through engagement with GCE in higher education, students should have opportunities to explore the ways in which different concepts influence each other. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to consider how issues are manifested at different spatial levels from the personal, through local and national to the global. Ultimately, this focus enables students to realise the myriad ways in which their lives are interconnected with the lives of people around the world, and the ways in which our lives are situated historically, and the consequent responsibilities these connections imply.

### *Skill 2: Question Orthodoxies*

The second core skill within the Model involves questioning orthodoxies. Orthodoxies, by definition, are pervasive in society and allow people to accept a current status quo as inevitable, leading people to believe that the way things are is the way they have always been. The pervasive stories that people tell about cultural, social, and political issues shape our society. Keating (2007) cautions us to be mindful of these stories as they can become self-fulfilling, if we come to accept the way things are as unavoidable, it is easy to believe change is impossible or ill-advised. She (ibid) uses the phrase ‘status quo stories’ to highlight the potentially damaging impact of unquestioningly accepting orthodoxies as this can serve to normalise current harmful social and political conditions and hinder the possibility of change. Not only does the acceptance of status quo stories hinder change, but Keating (2007, p. 23) maintains that they “seduce us into resisting change”. Adichie (2009), in her TED talk ‘*The danger of a single story*’, demonstrates through her own life experiences that we are “impressionable and vulnerable in the face of a story”. Additionally, Keating (2007, p. 122) proclaims that we are all born into “a reality filled with customs, stories, and myths that have already been recirculated countless times”. Both Ngozi and Keating’s assertions establish that from a young age we are inculcated in stories and both subtly and explicitly taught the orthodoxies which we come to consider as the truth about the world.

In encouraging us to become aware of our place within society, and consequent responsibilities, Andreotti (2006) implores us to acknowledge that we are all part of the problem and part of the solution. She (ibid) encourages us to accept that there are structures that benefit our lives, while simultaneously actively disempowering or harming others, and as a result, we are implicated in them. Keating (2007, p. 123) acknowledges the ways in which we are responsible for orthodoxies which perpetuate oppression and declares that we must “investigate and transform the ‘white’-supremacist masculinist framework that sustains status-quo stories’ power”.

While questioning skills are a core element of critical thinking, this skillset is also fundamental to the field of GCE. There are many social and political orthodoxies that GCE aims to challenge by presenting alternative perspectives and information to students. By imploring learners to “open their eyes to the reality of the world” (Council of Europe (CoE), 2002),

GCE positions itself as an educational approach committed to unravelling commonly accepted perspectives in favour of uncovering root causes for issues of injustice.

In the process of developing the skill to question orthodoxies, there are additional sub-skills which support developing this skill: the ability to identify orthodoxies, competence in deconstructing orthodoxies, and a commitment to envisaging new stories.

#### Skill 2, Sub-Skill 1: Identify Orthodoxies

It is not possible to challenge or question orthodoxies if we do not first learn to identify where beliefs and practices have become part of the status quo. Keating (2007, p. 24) outlines that this can be a difficult skill to master as she highlights that “generally we don’t recognise these beliefs as beliefs, we are convinced that these stories are rather accurate factual statements about the world”. Beliefs can become so engrained in societies’ collective psyche that it can become impossible to identify their origins as they become taken for granted assumptions about how the world operates (Brookfield, 1995). Often, orthodoxies take the form of simplistic generalisations in relation to entire groups of people or complex topics which can ignore the ways in which our societies, and ourselves as individuals have been shaped by phenomena such as colonialism (Keating, 2007). The danger of these generalisations is that when people conceptualise themselves according to status quo stories, they ignore the interconnections with or accountability we have to others (Keating, 2007). Status quo stories allow us to overlook the ways in which we may be complicit in perpetuating systems of inequality and limit our awareness of realities different from our own. Brookfield (1995, p. 15) likens critical thinking to “hunting assumptions of power and hegemony”. He defines hegemonic assumptions as “those that we think are in our own best interests but that have actually been designed by more powerful others to work against us in the long term” and asserts that critical thinkers must seek out and learn to identify where our assumptions are hegemonic and damaging (Brookfield, 1995, p. 15).

#### Skill 2, Sub-Skill 2: Deconstruct Orthodoxies

Once students learn to identify and notice orthodoxies, they can begin to question and deconstruct them. hooks (2010) detailed the lived importance of questioning orthodoxies which harm and subjugate entire groups of people. The feminist and civil rights movements are the results of

critical questioning of accepted narratives. These ongoing movements are responsible for significant societal changes which have had life-changing impacts for many people around the world. Deconstructing orthodoxies involves questioning taken for granted narratives and examining underlying implications of orthodoxies which shape society and our interactions.

Andreotti and deSouza (2008b) outline that culturalism is the assumption that Western, colonial, Eurocentric culture and knowledge are universal norms from which other cultures deviate. In this way, culturalism can be considered to be the cultural orthodoxies which exist in many societies. Drawing on the work of Spivak (1999), Andreotti and deSouza (2008b) promote deconstructive strategies in critiquing culturalism. A crucial step in learning to deconstruct orthodoxies is learning to unlearn privilege and learning to challenge the systems that benefit us at the expense of others. Andreotti and deSouza (2008a) include unlearning privilege as an aim of their pedagogical approach in the teaching resource *Through Other Eyes* which is designed to address the gap in GCE in Europe which often does not incorporate non-Western knowledge and resultingly can reproduce and perpetuate damaging orthodoxies about development and power. In a similar vein, Bourn (2015b) asserts that critical thinking within this context should include space to challenge assumptions about the lived reality and root causes of poverty and inequality.

### *Skill 2, Sub-Skill 3: Envisage New Stories*

Finally, in reshaping the narratives around orthodoxies, Keating (2007) proposes the generation of ‘new stories’ which engage our imaginations and empower us to change not just the pervasive stories but the structures that uphold them. For Keating (2007), it is crucial that interconnection is at the core of these ‘new stories’ as she maintains that separatist thinking is the pervasive norm in harmful oppressive societal orthodoxies.

Envisaging new stories in response to deconstructed orthodoxies responds to the call to include a futures dimension of GCE. Hicks (2008) advocates for GCE to include an explicit focus on the future, including imagining and planning for a preferable future in the face of knowledge about injustice in the present. Furthermore, each of the constituent approaches within GCE includes a focus on imagining new stories which would counteract both damaging discourses and unjust systems of inequality through a focus on action and change. Envisioning

new stories is presented within this model as a precursor to action by advocating for a space for students to envisage alternative futures and reconceptualise their ideas around justice issues and potential solutions to them.

### *Skill 3: Engage in Self-Reflection*

The third core skill within the Model is self-reflection which is a central component of both critical thinking and GCE. GCE asks the learner to reflect on their own lives, to make connections between their lives and the topics being explored and to imagine possible futures and how to enact change (Hunt, 2012). As an educational approach intrinsically linked with enacting change for a more just and sustainable world, GCE necessarily involves challenging ourselves and reflecting on our place in society. Additionally, self-reflection is considered to be a core critical thinking skill which critical thinkers should be applying across all areas of their lives (Bensley & Spero, 2014; Elder & Paul, 1996). Dwyer et al. (2014) contend that reflective judgement is employed by individuals at all stages of critical thinking. Not only is the conclusion or solution arrived at important in the reflective process, but so too is the way in which a conclusion is arrived at, reflective judgement involves acknowledging the limits of knowledge and being open to changes of opinion when presented with new evidence (Dwyer et al., 2014). Furthermore, from the field of GCE, Andreotti (2006) implores us to consider criticality not as determining right or wrong but as an opportunity for reflection. Reflection on our own contexts, on our own and others' assumptions about the world, and on the origins of those assumptions can support us to understand the implications of our belief systems regarding power, social-relationships, and the distribution of resources (Andreotti, 2006).

As a crucial element of both GCE and critical thinking, prioritising self-reflection in the classroom would allow students opportunities to consider and deepen their understandings of themselves, their place in the world and their relationship to others. However, it must be acknowledged that reflection is not always a fast or immediate process, the outcomes of self-reflection may not be evident within the life of an individual module or even the lifetime of their degree, and so the longer-term impact of this focus may not be observed by the teacher or facilitator. Learning to

engage in self-reflection involves the development of two additional sub-skills: a commitment to considering personal perceptions of the world and others, and a commitment to challenging those personal perceptions.

*Skill 3, Sub-Skill 1: Consider Personal Perceptions of the World and Others*

Fundamental to self-reflection is an awareness of our own ideas, opinions, and perceptions of the world around us and of other people whose lives and experiences differ from our own. Bensley and Spero (2014, p. 56) use the term metacognition, which refers to “knowledge, awareness and control of one’s own cognition”, to highlight the importance of self-reflection in the development of critical thinking skills. In their approach to critical thinking, through their focus on metacognition, they highlight the importance of a knowledge and awareness of one’s own mind. Although important in the course of self-reflection, the process of becoming aware of your own assumptions is not a straight-forward task. Brookfield (1995, pp. 28–29) highlights the complexity of this skill, stating that “no matter how much we think we have an accurate sense of ourselves, we are stymied by the fact that we’re using our own interpretive filters to become aware of our own interpretive filters” which he equates to the “pedagogic equivalent of trying to see the back of one’s head while looking in the bathroom mirror”. The need to become aware of structures and filters beyond ourselves and different from our own is also highlighted by Andreotti (2006, 2009, 2014), who across her writing has detailed the challenges she has encountered when faced with people unaware of the economic and social structures which influence their lives and ultimately their perception of the world.

Without developing an awareness of the privilege we each access as a result of our various identity markers, it is not possible to have a clear understanding of our perception of and assumptions about the world, and also the origins and implications of those ideas. Without this awareness, Brookfield (1995, p. 28) posits that we will continue within ‘a self-confirming cycle’ in which “our uncritical accepted assumptions shape actions that then serve to confirm the truth of those assumptions”. To resolve this perpetuating cycle, Brookfield (1995) recommends seeking out lenses that will reflect back at us a different picture of who we are. As this is not a task easily completed alone, this skill is actualised by exposing students to different lenses and perspectives around global justice issues

to support them in viewing their own lives and perspectives from an alternative angle.

*Skill 3, Sub-Skill 2: Challenge Personal Perceptions*

While developing an awareness of personal perceptions is a critical component of self-reflection, it is important to also commit to challenging and questioning those perceptions. By engaging in self-reflection learners can come to consider deeper questions about their own assumptions and have the opportunity for a transformation of viewpoints. Being open to personal viewpoints evolving or changing is advocated for by Andreotti (2006) who proposes that open-mindedness can be a catalyst for further engagement in justice issues. This viewpoint is further supported by Freire's (1970) approach to critical consciousness which asks learners to consider their viewpoints in light of historical, political, and social framings.

Bourn (2015b, p. 114) states that questioning our ideas and beliefs is unavoidable when learning about global and development issues. Considering new information in relation to root causes of poverty inevitably leads to rethinking personal views about the world. While inevitable, Bourn (2015b) also concedes that self-reflection in the context of GCE can be unsettling as it asks the learner to explore and challenge their own prejudices and question their personal values, attitudes, and relationships with the wider world. Engagement with reflection in this context can cause some learners to be confronted with elements of their own lives or values with which they are not happy. This can be challenging for learners and is an important consideration for teachers supporting students through this process.

*Skill 4: Use a Values-Lens*

Making use of a values-lens when exploring issues of global justice is the final skill within this Model. One of the complexities facing GCE internationally is the rising support for political parties with narrow nationalistic agendas (GENE, 2020) and the rise in xenophobic populism and hate speech in societies (CoE, 2018). This rise in prejudiced behaviours and attitudes will inevitably be manifest in many classrooms, and is in conflict with the values of GCE which focuses on promoting change for a more just, equitable, and sustainable world. This conflict in values could cause challenges for teachers. Therefore, there is a need for teachers to not only

self-reflect on their own value system but to support students to recognise their personal values, acknowledge where there are conflicts either internally or with others, notice where values have influenced the presentation of information they encounter, and learn to engage with values different from their own in a respectful manner. This requires time for reflection, debates and discussions, and opportunities to air opinions within the classroom.

Shah and Brown (2010, p. 40) posit that becoming more familiar with their own values, supports learners to be better able to “identify the values implicit in what they see, hear and read”, highlighting the impact that values have on all of our actions. Recognising the values behind information they encounter supports students in asking critical questions around motives and perspectives of an author or speaker. This can support learners to identify where perspectives which conflict with their own may be originating from a different values base.

Through a focus on this skill, it is expected that students would become aware of conflicting values systems. It would be important within this context that students are supported to consider changing or altering their own values and views based on rational consideration of diverging perspectives (Pollard, 2018). While changing values or viewpoints is not a necessary outcome of critical global learning, some degree of change is probable for anyone engaging with global issues in a critical manner as critical thinking necessitates an open-mindedness to new viewpoints and rational consideration of them. The process of engaging a values-lens involves two sub-skills: an open-minded approach to considering multiple perspectives, and the ability to identify where there are contradictions between values and actions.

#### *Skill 4, Sub-Skill 1: Consider Multiple Perspectives*

The importance of developing an awareness of multiple perspectives has been established within the first skill in this model. Within the context of developing a values-lens, exposure to a diversity of values and perspectives supports students to become aware of the ways in which values shape and influence actions, even subconsciously. A core skill needed for students to embrace critical thinking in the context of GCE is to be aware of perspectives which differ from their own and to consider the value systems which inform and influence them (Bourn, 2015a). Students should be given opportunities “to probe, to contemplate, and to articulate potentially challenging viewpoints” (Pollard, 2018, p. 180).

Furthermore, educators also need to be prepared for viewpoints which they may find uncomfortable to arise in the classroom (hooks, 2010). Pollard (2018) recommends that teachers provide space for diverse viewpoints to be aired in the classroom, not just those that align with their personal perspectives and values. Airing divergent values and opinions in the classroom provides opportunities for students to assess their merit and reject or support their classmates' perspectives. Engagement with diverse opinions and values is also advocated for by the CoE (2015, p. 7) who posit that "learning how to engage in dialogue with people whose values are different from one's own and to respect them is central to the democratic process and essential for the protection and strengthening of democracy and fostering a culture of human rights".

Additionally, the CoE (2015) assert that for young people who are frustrated or confused given the diversity of perspectives on different issues, education provides the ideal opportunity to support students to engage constructively with issues and come to greater understandings. Consequently, teachers have the responsibility to expose students to multiple, and particularly non-status quo perspectives as topics are explored. Students should have opportunities to voice their own opinions and to hear and consider the viewpoints of their classmates to support the reflective process (Brookfield, 2017). Ultimately, Bourn (2015b) highlights that engaging with a diversity of viewpoints will hopefully lead students to reflect on their own perspectives and values, and to engage in dialogue which supports students to listen to, question, and come to respect diversity in peoples' perspectives.

#### Skill 4, Sub-Skill 2: Identify Contradictions Between Values and Actions

Secondly, when learning to identify where values influence and shape our actions and thoughts, it is inevitable to begin noticing where there are contradictions between professed values and actions taken. In her discussion of democratic education, hooks (2010, p. 15) identifies the contradictions often found in policy and in rhetoric around equality. While those in positions of power may verbally or at policy level profess their commitments to equality and human rights, the resultant practices are often at odds with these values.

Therefore, a crucial element of criticality is the ability to identify where your own values may be at odds with your actions. Students should learn to recognise where decisions and actions arise out of a values system,

and work towards developing and being consistently conscious of their own values system and observing where their actions align or not with their values. Furthermore, through exploration of values inherent in GCE (commitment to human rights, equity, social justice) and their various interpretations, students learn to identify where their values align with or diverge from these core values. Learning to recognise such internal contradictions is recommended by Shah and Brown (2010) who promote challenging our own values by exposing the inconsistencies that we all have in our value systems. For example, they (ibid) highlight the incongruities between holding environmental values and a desire to fly and travel around the world.

### LEFT ARC: CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHING

The second arc within this model describes the considerations for teaching which influence critical global learning within the classroom. While not prescriptive in terms of solutions or approaches, the collection of factors included within this arc represent the aspects of education which, when considered from the outset, would support the teaching of critical global learning. The factors include the external influences which impact on teaching such as student background or societal influences, the pedagogic approaches adopted by the teacher, the conditions for learning within the classroom, and finally considerations in relation to the outcomes from engaging with critical global learning.

#### *Consideration 1: External Influences*

There are many factors external to the education system which cannot be controlled by teachers but which have an impact on students' experience of, and engagement with, learning. Consequently, it is important for teachers to have an awareness of the factors influencing their students' learning to allow them to respond to and mitigate against harm, or harness potential benefits as relevant and appropriate. Each student arrives in the learning space as a product of the world they have inhabited up until that point. Some influencing factors are individual such as family background or personal experiences, while other societal and cultural factors can impact on a large group of people simultaneously, though their impact can still be individual to each person.

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, society is awash with stereotypes and dominating discourses that often do not reflect the reality of global justice issues. The dominant orthodoxies that permeate society through media, political agendas, and other means can influence our perspectives, actions, and the way in which we interact with new information and knowledge. Andreotti and deSouza (2008b) label this as our ‘cultural baggage’ which we all bring to the learning space based on our own personal histories which are socially, culturally, and historically situated. This can include exposure to the rise in xenophobic populism and hate speech being seen internationally (CoE, 2018).

Not only do dominant societal narratives influence students’ engagement in GCE, but the way in which students have learned to interact with them and with information about justice issues can have a significant impact in the GCE classroom. Through family, education, or interactions with others, students can bring a tendency to question what they hear and think critically, or they can be disinclined to do so. Ghanizadeh (2017) posits that often students are ill-prepared for critical thinking in higher education due to limited preparation from their primary and secondary education. This is further highlighted by hooks (2010) who suggests that often students in higher education have become so engrossed in dominant societal and political narratives that they can struggle to engage with new ways of thinking.

While the external factors which impact on students’ learning are outside of a teacher’s control, they can be harnessed within the classroom. By trying to get to know students and providing opportunities for students to share their experiences and perspectives within the classroom, teachers can learn to adapt their teaching and be responsive to the lived experiences of the students within their classroom. Indeed, students’ prior experiences can often enhance the learning experience and add to the knowledge base within the classroom.

### *Consideration 2: Pedagogy*

Alexander refers to pedagogy as involving “what one needs to know and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted” (Alexander, 2004, p. 11). This conceptualisation of pedagogy is inclusive of both theory and practice. Alexander (2004) is as much concerned about what happens in the classroom as the rationale behind those

decisions. From a theoretical perspective, I draw on Freire's (1974) *Critical Consciousness*, Boler's (1999) *Pedagogy of Discomfort*, and Bourn's (2015b) *Pedagogy of Development Education* to inform the pedagogical approach of the conceptual framework in this book. The skills included earlier in this model suggest some pedagogical approaches necessary within the classroom to support them. The skills speak to an interactive approach to teaching which is focused on dialogue, modelling skills and attitudes, sharing challenging content knowledge, and supporting students to engage with and reflect on their learning.

Critical global learning aims to support students to critically reflect on the world and therefore relies heavily on a dialogical approach to teaching. To support the development of 'critical consciousness' Freire (1974) promotes an emancipatory approach to education which focuses on raising students' critical capacity, which can support them in changing their perceptions of reality. This is done through equal dialogue between students and teachers as opposed to the 'banking approach' in which teachers have absolute authority and ownership of knowledge (Freire, 1970). Freire (1970) considered this dialogical approach to be 'humanising' and focused on empowering people who were oppressed to become critically aware of the nature of this oppression and to challenge it through reflection and action, which he called praxis. The process relies on linking lessons from the classroom with students' lived experiences outside the classroom, and can be employed with all students, not just those who experience oppression.

Boler's (1999 p. 176) 'pedagogy of discomfort' which she describes as "both an invitation to inquiry as well as a call to action" echoes Freire's conceptualisation of praxis. Boler (1999 p. 176) invites us to learn to "inhabit a more ambiguous and flexible sense of self" in her approach thus inviting learners to engage in critical enquiry to learn to see the world differently. Boler (1999) believes that education holds the potential to be a space where learners and educators can together unearth and engage in disruptive practices such as challenging orthodoxies, questioning oppressive practices and exploring alternative approaches to justice. The collective approach mirrors the assertions of hooks (2010) and Freire (1970) that the teacher-student relationship be rooted in dialogue and mutual respect. Working collaboratively rather than individually to examine and explore global justice issues enables learners and educators alike to keep each other accountable to the broader nature of

issues to avoid reducing complex issues to individual interpretation or impact.

In her pedagogy, Boler (1999) pays particular attention to the emotions which emerge when engaged in critical enquiry. She (ibid) highlights the importance of recognising how emotions can impact on what a person chooses to see, or not to see. Furthermore, the questioning of cherished beliefs and values which follows from engaging in a pedagogy of discomfort can inevitably lead to strong emotions such as fear and anger (Boler, 1999). It might seem counter-intuitive to engage in an educational approach which may trigger such a strong emotional response in students. However, Faulkner (2012, p. 227) says that the rationale for this approach is emancipatory. She (ibid) believes that Boler's (1999) pedagogy of discomfort offers opportunities which enable us to identify where our reactions may be rooted in societal constructs and help to move beyond these shackles to engage in critical enquiry and disruptive practices. Ultimately, at the core of Boler's (1999) pedagogy of discomfort is a desire for students and teachers alike to critically examine personal values and attitudes in order to enhance awareness and critique of our self-constructed images of ourselves and others and how this can impact on how we see the world.

Bourn's (2015b) pedagogy of development education further echoes the learning from critical consciousness and pedagogy of discomfort. He (ibid. p.195) proposes that a pedagogy of development education is "a process of learning within which learners will interpret and engage in debates on development and make reference to their personal experiences, wider social and cultural influences, and their viewpoints on the wider world". Ultimately, Bourn (2015b) states that it is not the content alone that is important in this field, but the way in which information is presented, perceived, interpreted, and promoted. This requires teachers to recognise and encourage active engagement from learners in developing their own interpretations.

Finally, to support the implementation of the pedagogical approaches outlined here, teachers also need to ensure they are continuing to develop and expand their own knowledge base. Teacher reflection is advocated for by Dewey (1902) who posits that teachers need to continuously work on their professional judgement and decision making skills to ensure they do not accept without question teaching approaches which appear to offer good results. Bonfield and Horgan (2016) liken critical thinking

to teacher reflectiveness and advocate for teachers to engage in meaningful analysis of their practices followed by deliberate modifications when deemed appropriate.

### *Consideration 3: Conditions for Learning*

The conditions for learning created and supported in the classroom are a further consideration for how teachers can plan for teaching critical global learning. Although there are many conditions which influence the classroom, this Model focuses on relationships, values, and the learning environment.

#### *Consideration 3, Sub-Consideration 1: Relationships*

It is well established that the teacher-student relationship in the classroom is a crucial factor in supporting student engagement and learning. Indeed, hooks (2010, p. 22) states that when focusing on relationships in the classroom, it is the “mutual relationship between teacher and students that nurtures the growth of both parties, creating an atmosphere of trust and commitment that is always present when genuine learning happens”. Additionally Anderman (2021, p. 19) highlights that students are more “optimally motivated when they feel connected to others ... students want to feel like they belong in your classroom”.

Crucially, Freire (1970, p. 49) advocated for a transformation in the role of the teacher from “depositor, prescriber, domesticator” to becoming a student amongst students. He (ibid) identified communication as the cornerstone of this transformation. A democratic approach to schooling which includes an emphasis on respectful student-teacher relationships in which the teacher acknowledges the limitations of their own knowledge and the legitimacy of the knowledge brought to the learning space by their students can foster authentic, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationships. The teacher in this scenario is expected to consciously and consistently re-form their own reflections and conceptualisations in light of those offered by students (Freire, 1974). The approach to the teacher-student relationship taken by hooks (2010) reflects much of what was promoted by Freire. She (ibid) asserts that when responsibility for learning is shared, the classroom begins to take on the characteristics of a co-operative in which all members contribute to ensure optimal use of all resources in the learning space.

Purkey and Novak (2015, p. 1) reflect the contentions of Freire and hooks in asserting that “education should be a collaborative, cooperative activity” while also emphasising that the teacher must invite participation. Their contentions represent another dimension of the teacher-student relationship which relates to the extent to which teachers purposefully invite participation from their students through both the content of what they say and through their body language, voice, and actions. Bates (2019) contends that the invitational approach promoted by Purkey and Novak can aid in conveying respect, care, trust, optimism, and intentionality by the teacher. This in turn enhances the teacher-student relationship and engagement and learning in the classroom.

While the principles reflected above highlight aspirational goals for classroom practice, the reality of the classroom can challenge their implementation. As mentioned earlier within the model, external considerations such as personal experiences or societal influences can impact on the classroom and on students’ tendency towards, and approach to, participation. Regardless of these challenges, it remains that focusing on relationships within the classroom can support authentic learning for all in line with the ideals of critical global learning.

### *Consideration 3, Sub-Consideration 2: Values*

GCE is committed to values of equity, global social justice, and human rights (Bourn, 2015a, GENE, 2020; Hunt, 2012). These values influence not only the content of lessons but the way in which GCE is facilitated. A values-based approach to GCE supports learners to articulate the connections between their values and their actions through engaging with the values and perceptions that they and their classmates bring to the classroom and by creating a learning environment that reflects a variety of perspectives (Sharma, 2020).

Acknowledging that our values impact on our teaching requires us as educators to challenge ourselves to live more authentically and identify where we experience ourselves as living contradictions (Whitehead, 1989) when our values and practices do not match. Within critical global learning this can mean exploring the complex nuances of justice issues and beginning to learn about the wide-reaching implications of injustice in our own and our students’ daily lives. This can result in critical and sometimes uncomfortable conversations with students, family and friends, and fellow colleagues in the pursuit of authentically living out the values of justice and equity in the classroom.

Becoming conscious of personal values can support teachers in their practice, but it is also crucial for teachers to be aware of potentially competing values within the classroom and the influence this can have on students' receptivity to learning. As an educator I am conscious that values not only influence my practices, but can also impact on my students' engagement with their learning. Seethaler et al. (2019) outline that failing to consider students' values can be one of the most significant reasons that teaching can fail. They (ibid) posit that teachers should be conscious of their students' values when framing their teaching to ensure that students whose worldview may be in conflict with the values being promoted are not alienated from their learning.

*Consideration 3, Sub-Consideration 3: Learning Environment*

Finally, awareness of the learning environment is a key condition for learning which can be harnessed to foster reflection and engagement in the classroom. The fields of critical thinking and GCE both involve engaging with reflection, debate, discussion, and an openness to hearing and analysing a variety of perspectives. The learning environment can impact on the degree to which these processes are successful and the extent to which students authentically engage with them (Bonfield & Horgan, 2016). Baars et al. (2020) define the learning environment as inclusive of both the physical and the psychosocial conditions which influence learning.

While acknowledging the need to create a learning environment which encourages debate and discussion and in which students feel they can voice their opinion and ask questions, hooks (1994) challenges the notion that the learning environment should always be a safe and harmonious space. Given the complex and contested nature of many GCE topics, there is a need for the learning environment to contribute to challenging students preconceived ideas by promoting criticality in relation to many commonly accepted orthodoxies (Andreotti, 2006). This can be challenging and uncomfortable for students who find their beliefs and values being contested. However, hooks (1994) contends that uncontested, conceptualisations that reinforce racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of xenophobia are very damaging. Both the psychosocial and physical learning environments can be harnessed to encourage engagement and debate while ensuring that learning remains critical, and harmful perspectives are contested.

### *Consideration 4: Outcomes*

The final section of the model relates to the potential outcomes from critical global learning that teachers should be cognisant of. Awareness of outcomes from the outset is helpful for teachers in directing their planning and developing their learning objectives. There are two categories of outcomes from critical global learning to be cognisant of: those that are individual to each student and include both personal and professional development, and the outcomes for society more generally due to an increased number of critical global learners.

#### *Consideration 4, Sub-Consideration 1: Individual Outcomes*

On a personal level, students can be expected to have an increased awareness of global issues including an awareness of the complexity and contested nature of many topics (Andreotti, 2006; Hunt, 2012; Shah & Brown, 2010). Additionally, students of critical global learning should be able to demonstrate the impact their learning has had on their values and attitudes (Pollard, 2018, Shah & Brown, 2010). It is also expected that through engagement with critical global learning, students would develop a commitment to human rights and justice (CoE, 2002; GENE, 2020; Tormey, 2003).

At a professional level, it is expected that engagement with critical global learning within higher education will lead to students feeling more comfortable bringing the cognisant concepts and perspectives into their professional lives. However, this outcome is not guaranteed. Within the context of initial teacher education (ITE), Baily et al. (2017) highlighted that although many students are enthusiastic about teaching GCE following their engagement with it during ITE, others would feel uncomfortable doing so unless supported by curricular and assessment guidelines within their school setting. This finding highlights the importance of policy contexts and organisational culture in supporting students' implementation of critical global learning beyond higher education classrooms.

#### *Consideration 4, Sub-Consideration 2: Societal Outcomes*

The purpose of GCE is to challenge stereotypes and to promote responsible, ethical, and thoughtful action for social change (Andreotti, 2006; Hunt, 2012). In seeking to identify what unites the approaches within GCE, GENE (2020, p. 26) list "action for greater human rights for all" as one of its non-negotiable core tenets. Fundamentally, GCE calls students

to do something with the knowledge they are acquiring about the world, and to have a positive impact on development at local, national, and international levels. Characterising action is complex as it can take many forms, however, having an impact on the world first requires learners to acknowledge and take responsibility for the roles they and others play in systems which perpetuate inequity and injustice.

While this model focuses on teaching critical global learning, it does not have a remit to prescribe engagement in any particular forms of action or to measure its impact beyond the classroom. Instead, in highlighting the potential impacts beyond the classroom, this model provides opportunities for teachers to be cognisant of the broader societal impact of their work. In considering the possible outcomes for society, teachers can include space within the classroom for students to consider and reflect upon the possible impact they can have at a societal level by encouraging students to think about and discuss the implications and responsibilities which arise from increased criticality.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter detailed the model for critical global learning which was developed through literature review and refined in response to research findings. The model is attentive to the intersections between critical thinking and GCE and the considerations necessary for teaching critical global learning. Additionally, this model aims to be cognisant of the challenges and critiques facing both critical thinking and GCE.

Ultimately, the organisation of the model as a structure which is considerate of the holistic experience of teaching critical global learning is crucial to its success. The structure of the model provides a conceptualisation of the complete process of teaching and learning critical global learning which is considerate not just of the desired outcomes for students but intertwines our understanding of these outcomes with consideration for the varied factors which impact students learning.

It is intended that this model be used by educators to examine and consider their own practice in this field. The core commitment and skills provide the necessary focus for our teaching, learning, and assessment, while the considerations within the model invite educators to examine their approach to teaching and learning, and how it can be harnessed to better support students to develop their critical global learning skills and dispositions.

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# The Planning Tool for Implementing Critical Global Learning

## INTRODUCTION

While the Model outlined in Chapter Four offers clear conceptualisation considerations for understanding critical global learning, the *Planning Tool for Implementing Critical Global Learning*, which is the second component of the conceptual framework, offers a practical, structured tool focused on implementation. The Planning Tool was developed in response to challenges faced when attempting to implement the Model on its own. Consequently, the aim of the Planning Tool is to provide a systematic approach to teaching which offers space and opportunity to students to learn and to develop critical thinking skills, while still honouring students' voices, experiences, and opinions without compromising the core values of social justice and human rights.

This chapter will outline in further detail the rationale for and purpose of the Planning Tool, as well as detailed descriptions of each of its components. Similar to the Model, the Planning Tool is the result of both empirical research and a wide literature review and so in sharing the components of the tool, this chapter will focus on the theoretical foundations and origins of each component. Furthermore, as this tool is practical in nature, this chapter will include many practical examples of how it can, and has, been used in practice.

## RATIONALE FOR THE CREATION OF THE PLANNING TOOL

In developing the Planning Tool, I endeavoured to create conditions for learning which would lead to a culture of open and respectful dialogue in the classroom. I was conscious that many of the challenges encountered when aiming to implement the model as a standalone process related to finding the best ways of supporting students to go beyond their comfort zones and challenge themselves to develop their thinking, understanding, and criticality. When envisioning this Planning Tool, I embraced the idea of adopting a ‘pedagogy of discomfort’ (Boler, 1999) in which students and I were consistently challenged to be flexible in our perspectives and open to the possibility of change. A pedagogy of discomfort invites us to become comfortable with our uneasiness and not allow it to overwhelm us or lead to disengagement, but to learn to see things differently and become more flexible in our outlook (Boler, 1999). Additionally, I was conscious of a tension which emerged in my teaching prior to developing the Planning Tool, namely, the inclusion or exclusion of dissenting perspectives. In order to address this tension I incorporated the approach recommended by Pollard (2018), which involves engaging in respectful and robust dialogue in the classroom in which uncomfortable views are aired in order to be challenged through critical analysis rather than simply quashed by disapproval. In his approach, Pollard (2018) encourages us to embrace discomfort in the classroom. This approach to learning was the overarching principle which informed the development of the Planning Tool.

Furthermore, in developing the Planning Tool, I wanted to move to a model of planning which was cognisant of modules in their entirety rather than focusing on lectures individually. It was clear from analysing data collected prior to developing the Planning Tool that many students thrived when given opportunities to actively engage with GCE topics and reflect on their personal beliefs. However, when sessions were approached individually, my planning focused predominantly on content delivery, leaving skill and disposition development to fit around the content as a secondary planning focus. As a result, students did not have regular or sufficient time to practise critical thinking and to apply their learning to their own lives. I concluded from my analysis that for students who were struggling to develop the skills and dispositions I was seeking to engender, a more consistent and structured approach in my teaching was required.

This sentiment is mirrored by Kyriacou (2014) who posits that as educators gain experience, they tend to take a longer view of how lessons fit together and build on each other over time, whereas beginning teachers tend to focus on short-term learning outcomes for individual lessons. As my awareness and understanding of my teaching grew, I naturally began to consider the bigger picture and longer-term goals.

## THE PLANNING TOOL

The Planning Tool is presented visually as a funnel and includes three main components. Firstly, the funnel itself represents the necessary pre-conditions for learning which scaffold student learning. Secondly, the lesson elements sit within the funnel which each include two essential components: what happens (namely indirect and direct teaching, individual work, group work, and whole-class work), and how it happens (by focusing on challenging content, personalising issues, honouring all voices, and encouraging collective responsibility) in every lesson to enable students to develop their critical global learning skills. Finally, the anticipated outcomes emerge from the base of the funnel and ensure a focus on the purpose and impact of teaching and learning (Fig. 5.1).

### *Pre-Conditions for Learning*

The three pre-conditions for learning within the Planning Tool are the foundations upon which lessons are to be built. They constitute the necessary circumstances which need to be in place in order to enable students to get the most from their learning. While they are informed by research findings, they were refined through conversations with critical friends and engagement with literature and consequently also appear as one of the ‘considerations for teaching’ within the Model.

#### *Pre-Condition for Learning 1: Relationships*

Noddings (2003) describes teaching as a ‘relational practice’. She (ibid.) posits that many of the positive outcomes from education come as a result of relationships, with the examples of “the feeling of safety in a thoughtful teacher’s classroom, a growing intellectual enthusiasm in both teacher and student, the challenge and satisfaction shared by both in engaging new material, the awakening sense (for both) that teaching and life are never-ending moral quests” (Noddings, 2003, p. 249). Students’ engagement

## Planning Tool for Implementing Critical Global Learning

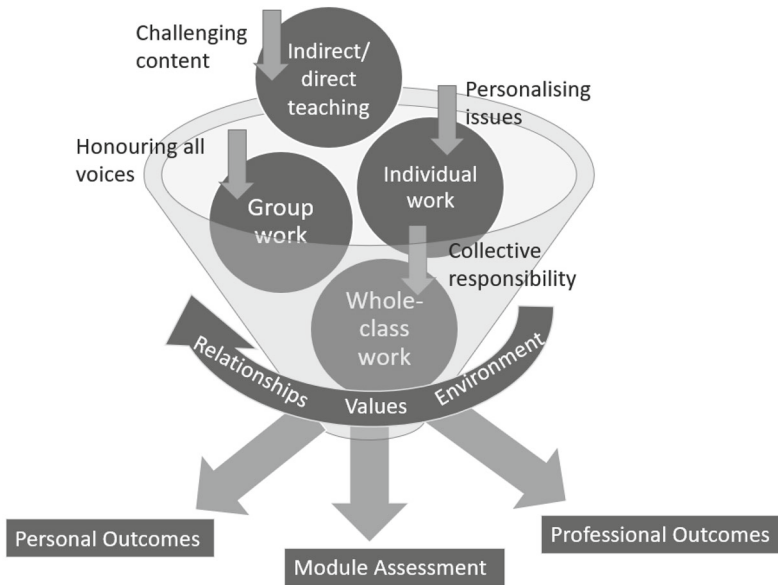


Fig. 5.1 The Planning Tool (Golden, 2022)

with and enjoyment of their learning increases when they have a good relationship with their teacher and feel like they belong in the space. Indeed, I have found that when students feel a connection with me, they are more likely to engage with the content being explored. Consequently, I wanted to ensure that a focus on building relationships within the classroom was embedded within the Planning Tool.

I find large student numbers to be a barrier to developing relationships with students because in any given week I can be working with over five hundred students from two or three different year groups and sometimes from two or three different programmes. I cannot rely on remembering names or details about individual students to support relationship building, and so I developed strategies to overcome this. While there are strategies for building relationships which all teachers will intuitively draw on from training and experience, I wanted to ensure that the Planning Tool included specific strategies to ensure a consistent and

conscious focus on developing relationship with students rather than relying on instinct. Furthermore, by focusing on relationships within my practice, I aimed to respond to established literature and research which informed the considerations for teaching within the Model shared in Chapter Four, with the knowledge that building relationships with learners can support educators to ensure their practice is intentionally inviting (Purkey & Novak, 2015).

One of the core goals I have set for myself when focusing on building relationships in the classroom is to create a culture of trust and mutual relationship amongst everyone in the room. There are a number of strategies that I use and have refined through research, these include:

1. Always saying hello and making small talk with students as they enter the room and take their seats in the few minutes before sessions get started.
2. Finding a way to say students' names during sessions. This can be done in a number of ways. One way I do this is when taking attendance for each session. I often take attendance when students are engaged in a group task at their desks by going to each table and personally taking the attendance. During this time, students hear me as their lecturer say each of their names and learn how to pronounce their names. Additionally, this is an opportunity to discuss the task at hand, the module as a whole, or questions they have in relation to the assessment. In this way each student has the opportunity to have a brief conversation with their me during each session.
3. To enable me to use students' names throughout each session, I also ask all students to display their names on their desks throughout lectures. This allows me to make the teaching and learning experience more personal by using students' names when talking to them without needing to learn hundreds of names. This has been a simple, but transformational approach I use with all groups I work with.
4. At the conclusion of every session, always thanking students sincerely for their participation regardless of the quality of the input or my personal or professional opinion on their contribution but focusing on acknowledging the importance of their voice in the space. Additionally, at the end of lessons I make time to be available for students for a few minutes for any follow-up questions or discussions.

5. Making a conscious and consistent effort to display energy, enthusiasm, and passion for what I am teaching, even when I am feeling tired or unwell, with an understanding that the way in which I present myself will impact on student engagement and willingness to connect with me. Additionally, I ensure to show a genuine interest in my students lives, opinions, and experiences.

Consistently implementing these five strategies does not require any additional time beyond what is needed for lectures, but does create conditions for relationship building within the classroom.

### *Pre-Condition for Learning 2: Environment*

When the learning space is consciously arranged and utilised, students' ability to engage and be vulnerable can significantly improve. The learning environment includes both physical and psychosocial conditions that influence learning and engagement in the classroom (Baars et al., 2020). Through an extensive literature review Baars et al. (2020) found a reciprocal relationship between the psychosocial and physical learning environments which dynamically respond to changes in conditions of either. Some of the dimensions of the physical learning environments are not easily influenced such as natural elements or flexibility of the space. However, teachers can have more control over the level of stimulation in a classroom (Muijs & Reynolds, 2018). Additionally, much of the psychosocial learning environment can be adapted by teachers to support the needs of their students. In designing the Planning Tool, I was conscious of the need to develop strategies and approaches that would support me to harness the potential of both without encroaching unnecessarily on time for teaching and learning in the classroom. Lambert (2011, p. 28) uses the term psycho classrooms in which the design and use of space works to "disrupt and redistribute what forms of knowledge might be sayable, audible, visible and do-able". With the aim of encouraging deeper reflections and more frequent interactive discussions, I design teaching and learning approaches which use the classroom environment in this way.

The following are some of the strategies I developed which continue to support me in setting up the learning environment in a way which is conducive to students developing critical global learning skills:

1. Requiring students to sit in groups no larger than 4 to ensure authentic engagement for all members:

From research findings, I learned that when students are seated in large groups, it can be easy for some students to dominate tasks and discussions, while others remain silent. Seating students in groups no larger than four ensures that all members of the group have opportunities to contribute to activities and discussion, and reduces opportunities for disengagement. The classroom can be arranged to reflect this, but it is crucial to always remind students as they enter the classroom of required group sizes.

2. Dependable routine when there are regular classes:

GCE necessitates a focus on challenging or overwhelming topics, and is predicated on experiential learning. Both of these aspects of GCE can lead to the learning environment feeling unpredictable, and consequently unsafe for students. Developing a flexible routine that students can rely on supports student engagement as they know what to expect when they enter the learning space. There are multiple components to the routine I use, all grounded in literature and evidence from research findings. The routine includes:

- Establishing and consistently reinforcing ground rules and commitments based on respect for each other and the learning space. The commitments I reiterate at the beginning of every session are to be respectful, to be open-minded, and to participate.
- Beginning with a quick reflection to ground us and often offering a poem or quote to get us into the mindset of the upcoming class. Reflections help students focus their minds on the upcoming session and set their intentions to participate in each session from the outset in order to get the most out of it.
- Ensuring that every session includes a combination of activities based on the lesson elements from this Planning Tool, ensuring that students can expect to engage with new knowledge, but also to work in groups and have to contribute in class.
- Table packs available with interactive materials to use throughout lectures:

The table packs I use include relevant worksheets, quotes, prompts, or questions for each session, along with individual whiteboards, markers, paper, and voting sticks (red, orange, green) for quick visual responses to questions. These packs provide students with prompts for the session and multiple means of engagement throughout the sessions.

#### 4. Displays that reinforce key messages and values:

In higher education it is often not possible to have control over the physical environment as you may not always be teaching in the same room. However, when possible, using the physical environment to display relevant materials can reinforce messages and promote peripheral learning (Muijs & Reynolds, 2018). Displays that relate to key messages of the modules can be used as quick reference points and reminders for us and students during sessions. They can also prompt critical questions, inspire alternative ways of thinking, reinforce the use of human rights frameworks, and reiterate the key messages that everyone brings valid knowledge to the space and that all knowledge can be questioned.

#### *Pre-Condition for Learning 3: Values*

GCE has a strong values dimension and, consequently the use of a values-lens in exploring global justice issues was included as a key skill in the Model outline in Chapter Four. While the development of values is often cited as a core outcome for GCE, values also play an important role in supporting student receptivity to global learning. Indeed, the pre-existing values that students bring to the classroom can be either barriers or enablers to their learning. The deficit model of education assumes that facts will speak for themselves and will unfailingly convince people to change their understanding and attitudes towards an issue (Seethaler et al., 2019). However, communication and learning can truly break down when educators fail to account for learners' often diverse values (Seethaler et al., 2019).

Research findings from the early stages of the research project indicated that at times there was a tension between the values being promoted within the modules and the values held by some of the students. This impacted on their learning and engagement. Conscious of this tension, when developing approaches within the Planning Tool I endeavoured not to shut out divergent values but to provide opportunities for students

to share and discuss values that ran counter to those of the module. This provides opportunities to share and explore counterarguments or explicitly state where values being shared diverged from a human rights framework and commitment to justice.

Topics such as gender, racism, and sustainability tend to provoke strong opinions in students that reflect a range of values not always aligned with those of GCE. By providing opportunities such as participation in walking debates or ranking exercises, students have the opportunity to discuss and share their perspectives in the context of those of their classmates, in line with a social-constructivist approach (Vygotsky, 1978). These approaches often help students to recognise where their opinions may be founded on a different values base than that of their classmates. Where counterarguments do not emerge from their classmates, the teacher or facilitator can step in and share alternative perspectives on topics, or ask probing questions to support students in recognising the underlying values informing their perspectives. In this way, students can come to recognise where their own values can act as barriers or enablers in their engagement with GCE and the development of their criticality.

In designing the Planning Tool, I wanted to ensure that values were consistently threaded through all interactions with students. Thus, I included an awareness of values as a pre-condition for learning by deliberately adopting strategies that enabled me to be responsive to students while still retaining a focus on the key values of GCE such as equity, justice, and human rights. Indeed, immersing learning in the values of GCE, not just teaching about them, facilitates experiential learning and enables learners to know themselves better.

Some of the strategies I use to facilitate this immersion include:

- The introduction session for the module begins with a collective agreement to adopting an open-minded approach to learning and a commitment to growth and change, this is referred to frequently throughout the module.
- Reflections at the beginning of each session are used to focus on the values inherent in the topic being explored, which are usually explicitly stated during the reflection.
- Explicitly stating the inherent values in what we are discussing and inviting alternative perspectives.
- Human Rights based frameworks are on display in the room, when possible, and used as a reference point during discussions.

- Asking probing questions to scaffold students in developing their awareness of the values set they are drawing on in their own responses.
- Using values-based language in my responses to students by using statements such as “from a human rights perspective...” or “with a justice or equality framework I see it differently because...”.
- Providing students with opportunities to consider, share, and discuss their perspectives and values within every session.
- Providing opportunities to consider reflective questions privately.

These strategies provide opportunities for students to reflect on their personal values, while ensuring that there are opportunities to respond to values or perspectives that might be in conflict with those promoted in the module. Additionally, throughout modules I am conscious of the ways in which my personal values and experiences might impact on my teaching and try to be transparent about this by sharing my own values and opinions. When sharing my personal values or perspectives, I always include a caveat that students are not required to agree with me, but are encouraged to come to their own conclusions. I share my perspectives as a way of ensuring transparency of my own biases, and to model for students what it looks like to consider and share personal values. In doing so, I also often share with students where my own values or perspectives have changed or grown over time. An openness to growth and change is an important skill within both GCE and critical thinking.

### *Lesson Elements*

The lesson elements within the Planning Tool evolved from the challenges encountered during research when implementing the Model on its own. Additionally, the elements are informed by literature, and were refined through critical conversations with colleagues. One key challenge I encountered in my teaching which informed the development of the Planning Tool was erratic attendance and unpredictable interest levels which meant that not all students engaged meaningfully with the development of the range of critical global learning skills I wanted them to develop. While acknowledging that attendance rates and interest levels are often beyond my control, I wanted to mitigate against the potentially harmful impact on students' learning. My frustration led me to realise the gaps in my practice, which prompted me to develop the four lesson elements

within the Planning Tool to respond directly to these challenges. The inclusion of all four elements in each session ensures that all students have the opportunity to interact meaningfully with each of the lesson elements throughout the module, regardless of attendance or differing levels of interest.

The elements are designed to all be included in all lessons, and include both what happens (written on the balls within the funnel) and how (the arrows entering the balls in the funnel). The lesson elements are: (1) Indirect and direct teaching realised through a focus on challenging content, (2) Group work realised through honouring all voices, (3) Individual work focused on personalising issues, and (4) Whole-class work focused on collective responsibility. Depending on the session, each element might have a more or less significant role. However, in planning for each session, the aim is to consider ways to include all four. While this may be ambitious within short sessions, this structure responds to the challenges identified in research by providing opportunities for engagement in a variety of ways in every session and ensuring that I can focus on providing ambitious yet achievable opportunities for criticality. The combination of the four lesson elements aligns with Ennis' (1989) infusion approach to teaching critical thinking which combines a focus on subject matter instruction with explicit teaching of critical thinking skills through emphasising thinking critically about the subject matter being explored. This approach supports students to acquire critical thinking skills through a joint focus on teacher modelling of criticality in practice along with providing time for students to practise their skills supported by feedback (Bensley & Spero, 2014).

Additionally, the development of the lesson elements drew influence from Freire's conceptualisation of praxis. Freire (1970, p. 60) defined praxis as "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed". He (ibid.) conceptualised praxis as a dialogical approach which enables people who engage in it to acquire critical consciousness of their own lives and their place in the wider world. I was conscious that students struggled at times to authentically connect their learning to their own lives, and so I deliberately included 'personalising issues' as an approach to one of the lesson elements. Additionally, I endeavoured to honour Freire's (1970, p. 61) contention that "human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection" through centring opportunities for dialogue and interaction in the lesson elements. The lesson elements provide opportunities for discussion both in small groups and at whole-class level. This focus was included because research findings prior

to the development of the Planning Tool highlighted the importance of providing opportunities for interaction as students' learning progressed significantly when they engaged pro-actively with their learning and viewed their ideas in the context of other perspectives. Finally, 'challenging content' was included as a teaching approach to ensure the focus remained on content which pushed students beyond their comfort zones and helped them to question their pre-conceptions. Furthermore, in detailing the conditions for praxis Freire (1970) discusses the need for individuals engaged in dialogue to act with humility and respect for each other. In this way, his contentions have also informed the pre-conditions for learning already outlined earlier in this chapter.

Finally, the development of these lesson elements draws inspiration from the sequential conceptual framework designed by Andreotti and deSouza (2008a) for the resource *Through Other Eyes*. As outlined in Chapter One, their framework includes four steps: learning to unlearn, learning to listen, learning to learn, and learning to reach out. As each lesson element is explained further the connections to Andreotti and deSouza's framework will be outlined.

*Lesson Element 1: Direct and Indirect Teaching Focused on Challenging Content*

Within this first lesson element, students engage with information which may disrupt or challenge their established beliefs or ideas about the world. This focus on content aims to enable students to begin the process of learning to unlearn 'status quo stories' (Keating, 2007) or challenge common stereotypes by broadening their understanding of the world. This lesson element is linked to the first step in Andreotti and deSouza's (2008a) conceptual framework; learning to unlearn. They (ibid., p. 29) state that "learning to unlearn is about making connections between social-historical processes and encounters that have shaped our contexts, and cultures, and the construction of our knowledges and identities". As a result, this lesson element consistently includes an explicit focus on the power relationships which have shaped and influenced the topic being discussed. This is done through mindful selection of resources and deliberate design and use of prompts, questions, and statements while exploring content. Furthermore, Andreotti and deSouza (2008a, p. 3) highlight the need to deconstruct status quo stories about the world during this step by "making visible the origins and hidden agendas of taken for granted concepts". Consequently, it is crucial that within this

lesson element, students not only engage with new information but are supported to consider it in light of the ways in which it differs from commonly held beliefs about the topic in question.

Depending on the topic and teaching methodology being used, this may be explicitly discussed through direct teaching or may indirectly emerge naturally as a result of student engagement with content in light of prompts or activities provided. As the aim of learning activities during this lesson element is to present students with information that might challenge or disrupt their prior understanding of the topic, teaching approaches can respond according to the needs in the room. Where there is a need to share large volumes of new information with students, direct teaching using a PowerPoint or other prompts, or sharing a video or piece of text with students to engage with themselves works well. I find that this method is necessary when teaching students about topics such as structural inequality and covering topics like trade, aid, and debt as students often either have very little prior knowledge on these topics or the information they have can be incorrect. Other approaches rely on students coming to the space with relevant prior knowledge to build on and challenge. When this is possible, students are given opportunities to engage with new learning to expand and challenge their own using prompts or other materials during activities like a quiz, a gallery walk, engaging in a simulation game (such as the biscuit game, the trade game, or if the world were a village of 100 people), or completing a timeline using prompts and information provided by the teacher. I use these approaches when teaching topics such as migration, sustainability, gender, or racism as students often have some relevant prior knowledge and experience of these topics which can be challenged and built upon.

Additionally, the lens through which a topic is explored, or the perspective taken by the teacher can have a significant impact on student engagement with a topic. The teaching resource 'Tackling Controversial Issues in the Citizenship Classroom' (Emerson et al., 2012) provides a framework for considering teacher stance and encourages teachers to reflect on the way in which they frame issues when presenting them. The resource lists the possible positions a teacher can take in the classroom in relation to particular issues as neutral facilitator, declared interest, official line, ally, or devil's advocate (Emerson et al., 2012, p. 25). Considering teacher stance from the outset can help teachers to clarify their own feelings on specific subjects, and support the planning process for lessons. Secondly, the resource advocates for consideration of the way in which

issues are framed in the classroom. The resource proposes looking at topics through a human rights framework, a legal framework, or a social responsibility framework. This approach to topics can support students in considering topics from a broader perspective and can support teachers to challenge discrimination in a structural way (Emerson et al., 2012).

*Lesson Element 2: Group Work Focused on Honouring All Voices*

Disparity in the participation levels from different students is a common challenge in classrooms at any stage. The same voices are heard repeatedly, while other students are noticeably silent week after week. Therefore, this second lesson element is designed to ensure there is a structure in place to provide opportunities for all students to participate and share their opinions during each session. This is done by providing dedicated time during every session for students to work in small groups on a set task where all members of the group are asked to contribute. This provides opportunities for students to hear others' opinions and experiences which can be helpful in supporting them to broaden their understandings and awareness. Additionally, for students who typically remain silent during whole-class work, having the opportunity to voice ideas in a small group setting initially makes it easier to then share ideas with the larger group. As part of the pre-condition for learning related to the classroom environment, students are already sitting in small groups which helps to facilitate the implementation of this lesson element.

Furthermore, this lesson element supports the facilitation of highly interactive teaching which can be challenging with large groups as it is not possible to have in-depth conversations or give one-to-one support to all students within a larger group. Good and Brophy (2008, p. 182) posit that "small group formats also hold potential for contributing to students' sense of belonging and community, which may enhance commitment to schooling". Therefore, this lesson element provides a mechanism to support students' interaction and ensure opportunities are consistently provided for all students to engage with content, practice skill development, and express opinions. Within smaller groups, students can also engage in peer-evaluation and feedback to supplement the support which a teacher would be able to give more readily in smaller group sizes.

This lesson element is linked to the second step in Andreotti and deSouza's (2008a) conceptual framework; learning to listen. This step is important in supporting students to "learn to recognise the effects

and limits of our perspective, and to be receptive to new understandings of the world” (Andreotti & deSouza, 2008b, p. 29). By working in small groups, hearing the perspectives of classmates and working together to question and challenge both the lesson content and each other’s contributions, students are supported to develop a habit of consistently scrutinising what they hear and read. In this way, students learn to recognise the limitations of relying only on their own assumptions, and to consider different perspectives on topics.

The key teaching approach within this lesson element is to ensure that students have dedicated time to work on a task within their groups of four. Consequently, tasks can be as simple as allowing students unstructured time to formulate responses to statements or questions posed by the teacher or can be more structured by using discussion methodologies such as round robin, silent debates, dice discussion, completing ranking activities, or using the deBono Thinking Hats as a framework to discuss a topic from multiple angles (Golden, 2023). The jigsaw approach also provides opportunities for all students to contribute meaningfully to group discussions by assigning members as experts in different areas and allowing time for them to move around the room engaging with new learning before returning to their original group to report back. To support students to push each other to deepen criticality within the group, they should be encouraged to always consider what frame of reference they are using to respond to activities. Questions such as: ‘what information did you draw on for your ideas?’, ‘what are the consequences of thinking like this?’, or ‘who benefits from these ideas?’ can help students to scaffold each other’s skill development in the absence of one-to-one support from a teacher.

### *Lesson Element 3: Individual Work Focused on Personalising Issues*

The inclusion of this third lesson element affords students the opportunity to link the issues being explored to their own lives and reflect on their reactions to the information and ideas they engage with as part of the learning process. Acknowledging and reflecting on personal reactions supports students to develop a better understanding, and promotes more frequent exploration of their personal opinions and values. This element of lessons supports students to reflect on why they embrace some ideas, while finding others more difficult to accept. Ultimately, encouraging students to personalise issues enables them to develop feelings of empathy and responsibility and to engage with issues on a deeper level.

This lesson element is linked to the third step in Andreotti and deSouza's (2008a) conceptual framework, learning to learn. The process of learning to learn facilitates students to engage in a process of applying new learning to their own lives in order to re-arrange, expand, and deepen their own perspectives and understandings about the world (Andreotti & deSouza, 2008b). During this process, students are encouraged to consider issues not only from their own perspective but to try to see 'through other eyes' (Andreotti & deSouza, 2008a) to broaden and enhance their own understanding and empathy within a wider context. This lesson element can cause discomfort for students who are asked to confront their own biases and privileges in light of the perspectives of others. In applying this element to lessons, I embrace a 'pedagogy of discomfort' (Boler, 1999) by asking students to adopt an open-minded and flexible approach to examining their own lives and perspectives.

Due to the personal nature of this lesson element, teaching methodologies often allow students to engage with this element individually by engaging with methodologies such as exit slips where students are asked to respond to prompts or questions posed by the teacher in relation to their reaction to the session, or follow a guided visualisation or reflection from the teacher and write a personal response immediately afterwards. These activities allow students to engage independently and anonymously which can often enable students to reflect on a deeper level and can encourage greater honesty in their responses. However, there is also value in supporting students to realise that their perspectives and experiences are often not isolated, but shared by their peers. Consequently, incorporating this lesson element into your teaching also involves implementing teaching methodologies which allow students to consider their perspectives in context of those of the overall group. Activities which facilitate this include voting or sharing of opinions on materials covered using either physical voting sticks from the table packs, or digital tools such as mentimeter with results shared on the interactive whiteboard, or using individual whiteboards to record and display reactions or responses. When using these approaches, as the teacher, I will often read out or comment on the patterns I see in the room, encouraging students to reflect further on that aspect and enabling me to facilitate a broader discussion with the wider group. Due to the nature of GCE, this lesson element can also be an important space to encourage students to consider their own actions and lifestyles. Consequently, incorporating questions which prompt students to consider how their own lives interact with an issue being explored

can support them in considering personal commitments to engaging with action or change for global justice.

*Lesson Element 4: Whole-Class Work to Promote Collective Responsibility*

This final lesson element provides opportunities for students to share their ideas with the whole group, either as individuals or on behalf of their smaller groups, following a task or activity completed at their tables. This affords students the opportunity to hear from a wider variety of voices than just those reflected at their tables. Critically, by including opportunities where students are asked to feed back or share with the whole group in every session, they are encouraged to remain engaged throughout the entirety of the session in order to be able to participate in this element. The core purpose of the inclusion of this lesson element in every session is to counteract the tendency for some students to disengage from their learning during sessions through ensuring that they are accountable for their engagement and learning in some way. Additionally, by consistently asking students to share their perspectives and ideas with the whole group, I aim to instil in students the message that not only are they expected to contribute but that their contributions have value within the classroom and that we all share responsibility for shaping the learning in the classroom.

This lesson element draws inspiration from the final step in Andreotti and deSouza's (2008a) conceptual framework; learning to reach out. This process supports students to experience what happens when they expose themselves to difference by sharing their own perspectives and hearing those of other people. The process of reaching out often results in mutual teaching and mutual learning through the sharing of different perspectives (Andreotti & deSouza, 2008b). According to Andreotti and deSouza (2008b, p. 29) "learning to reach out is about learning to engage, to learn and to teach with respect and accountability". By 'reaching out' in the context of the classroom, students should be better prepared to reach out in other contexts and learn from others in additional aspects of their lives.

Westwood (2015, p. 174) posits that when engaged in large group teaching, utilising methodologies to capture and interpret large volumes of feedback in a short time "ensures a high rate of interactive participation by all students". The process of sharing at a whole group level could be impractically time consuming if all students are asked to share their

ideas verbally and individually. Consequently, using teaching methodologies that allow students to share their ideas simultaneously is key to ensuring this element can realistically be included in all sessions. Some of the methodologies used for this element overlap with those already mentioned in relation to the lesson element ‘personalising issues’. These include using voting sticks, or individual whiteboards to allow students to share their feedback. Other methods include walking debates, co-creating timelines, or contributing to other shared whole-class representations of learning such as Padlet or mentimeter. If the timing of lessons does not allow for open whole-class discussions based on this feedback, the results of these can then be summarised by the teacher for all. Additionally, I often engage with this lesson element following a group task when each group will be asked to summarise their response to a prompt they have been engaging with.

### *Outcomes*

There are three categories of outcomes included in the Planning Tool: personal outcomes, professional outcomes, and module assessments. The module assessment embodies the visible and measurable outcomes from the module, while the personal and professional outcomes for students are likely to remain less visible and be complex or unfeasible to accurately quantify. However, while the module assessment reflects students’ competence at a moment in time, it does not indicate the extent to which they are likely to transfer their learning to their lives beyond the module. In contrast, the personal and professional outcomes for students relate to the longer-term impact that engaging in the module can have for students’ lives beyond the module.

The summative assessments I use require students to consider how their learning has progressed and to reflect on their perspectives as a result of participation in the module. It also supports me to assess the effectiveness of the module in supporting students to develop critical global learning skills. However, the overarching objective of the modules I work on is to have an impact both personally and professionally for students regardless of whether or not these can be easily measured or tracked. These modules are designed to support students to develop their critical thinking skills which, it is hoped, should impact their lives both personally and professionally. In conversations with students, I have noticed that they often focus on their professional development in modules. However, they

don't usually link their development as professionals with the personal development they engage in during the module through the exploration of values, attitudes, and skills which can support them to become more reflective and engaged in their future careers.

The personal development students experience can be observed through their contributions to the module by the language they use, the questions they ask, and the comments they make. Very often these contributions can reveal students' underlying attitudes and values and reflect any learning journey they have taken. However, personal development is not always straight forward to measure or observe as the impact the module has will be unique for each student and can take time to manifest as students continue to think about issues explored in class. This means that the results may not be visible within the life cycle of the module.

Professionally, it is hoped that students adopt a critical thinking approach within their own professional lives as a result of their participation in this module. The students I work with are training to become primary school teachers and so throughout the course of their engagement with GCE, students are encouraged to consider how they could apply their learning to the primary school classroom both through distinct lessons and through the values, attitudes, and dispositions that they embody and share with their own pupils. Similar considerations in relation to explicit and implicit practices would apply to other professions. While students have the opportunity to reflect on these questions during modules, the reality of how they choose to implement their learning is only visible when they enter the workplace as professionals. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of modules in higher education to track or observe how students choose to apply their learning to their professional practices.

## IMPLEMENTING THE PLANNING TOOL

It was clear from analysis that for the Planning Tool to come alive, it was not only dependent on what happened in the classroom, but on how it was facilitated. One student summed this up in a focus group interview by stating that *"There's no harm in just being nice, for myself I can see a real connection between the subjects I like and engage in and the lecturer, their compassion"* (cycle three, group D, focus group one participant). Similar findings were found across all research cycles which made it clear from students' comments that they considered lecturer temperament towards

their students and the subject matter as a key factor in determining their engagement levels. Other students reiterated the importance of lecturers being enthusiastic about what they are teaching by stating, for example, that *“if someone is interested in what they’re doing and they actually seem enthusiastic it’s nearly contagious, you feel enthusiastic about it as well”* (cycle three, group D, focus group two participant). As evidenced by these quotes, the atmosphere created in the classroom by the teacher through a focus on the pre-conditions for learning from the Planning Tool can be critical in supporting students to feel comfortable and want to learn. While I was aware of this from earlier research cycles, the Planning Tool enabled me to intentionally focus my attention on enhancing my approach by focusing on relationships, values, and environment through the pre-conditions for learning.

Furthermore, when I was reflecting on sessions that I felt were successful during the research cycle in which I implemented the Planning Tool, I noted that a key determinant of success was the energy and enthusiasm I brought to the session. Good and Brophy (2008) posit that enthusiasm from educators leads to greater engagement and higher achievement levels for learners. A key learning for me from this reflection is the acknowledgement that to successfully implement the Planning Tool and support students to develop the skills and dispositions to be critical global learners, it requires hard work. It was not a passive process to implement the Planning Tool, but necessitated considered preparation, focused attention, and a level of energy in the delivery style.

## REFLECTING ON THE KEY OUTCOMES OF THE PLANNING TOOL

One of the key successes I have found in implementing the Planning Tool has been in supporting students to feel comfortable in the classroom and enthusiastic about their learning. As the initial module where I implemented the Planning Tool for the first time progressed, I observed that the biggest impact that using the Planning Tool was having was on student motivation and engagement. During earlier research cycles, my focus had been predominantly on the knowledge and skills I wanted students to develop rather than ensuring that I was creating the best conditions for learning. It quickly became clear to me that focusing on developing and maintaining student motivation and engagement was a

critical precursor to them developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions the modules sought to engender. From the outset of the module in which the Planning Tool was first implemented, I noticed not only greater engagement from students, but also greater depth and reflection in their answers and contributions during class than what I had seen during previous iterations of the same module. One of the key factors to which I attribute this success was through offering multiple ways for students to engage with the content and have their voices heard in each session. The lesson elements of the Planning Tool help to ensure that in each session students can expect to be asked to reflect or contribute individually, in small groups, and as part of the whole class.

These approaches showcase the way in which Ennis' (1989) infusion approach can be used to provide opportunities for student to explicitly practise critical thinking skills in the context of topics being explored. Different teaching methodologies are useful for different purposes, some lean more towards self-reflection, while others help students to question orthodoxies or consider the values implicit in what they were engaging with. Having quick methodologies, such as voting sticks and digital surveys throughout classes ensures students are practising their critical thinking skills while also keeping them engaged. I like to combine quick strategies with those that require more time and in-depth reflection such as written responses or discussion to vary the levels of criticality students are being asked to engage with as their comfort levels develop. The importance of offering multiple and diverse opportunities to contribute during classes was captured well by one student who stated that:

I think we get to do so much interactive and group work and it's not all just sit there and put up your hand with an answer or ... I feel like a lot of people are given opportunities if they didn't want to talk in front of the whole class, they still have an opportunity to get their opinion across. The different methodologies has already made it open to a lot of different learners and styles.  
(cycle three, group D, focus group three participant)

Furthermore, students indicated that when they had opportunities to practise sharing their perspectives throughout multiple classes and in a variety of ways, this helped them to build their confidence and continue to increase their engagement as the module progressed. One student highlighted this by stating that *“If you keep doing it, like, you get more*

*comfortable with it*" (cycle three, group E, focus group one participant). While other students described the impact group work had on their confidence, stating that when they had the opportunity to discuss topics in small groups first, they gained confidence to then offer opinions in front of the whole class.

The aspect I have observed as the most significant contributor to continued student engagement is the opportunity to contribute ideas and answers in ways that allow for a level of anonymity which encourages depth and honesty and enables students to situate their ideas in context of those of the wider class. Critical global learning asks students to embrace discomfort, which can be challenging, but this approach enables students to move out of their comfort zones in a supported way. The use of methodologies such as the individual whiteboards provided a stepping stone for students to move into more uncomfortable spaces without feeling too exposed. When reflecting on the success of using the whiteboards I noted that *"often I found that students would hold up a board but not make eye contact with me, knowing I could read it out, they could distance themselves from what they had written but still be heard"* (researcher reflective diary). Furthermore, using the whiteboards enables me to acknowledge a wide variety of responses very quickly, something that isn't usually possible with large groups. Additionally, I often use content from the whiteboards as the basis for discussion, or as prompts to ask students clarifying or probing questions. This approach keeps classes more dynamic than they had been previously.

Ultimately, I have found that when students are more consistently engaged in each lesson, they are more receptive to the content being shared and more likely to develop the skills and dispositions being promoted. Students know that when they come to GCE classes, they can expect a dynamic and active teaching approach which encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning rather than passive delivery of information. This is highlighted by one student who stated that: *"criticality happens every week because there are always debates at the tables and things to talk about and think differently about"* (cycle three, group D, focus group three participant).

## CONCLUSION

The Planning Tool is designed to provide educators with a mechanism to plan for effective critical global learning in line with the skills and dispositions outlined in the Model in Chapter Four. Furthermore, the Planning Tool responds to the challenges which emerged when attempting to implement the Model in isolation. Its development was guided by research data in addition to research from a variety of authors through the literature review.

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PART III

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Considerations for the Implementation of  
this Conceptual Framework for Critical  
Global Learning



# Tensions in Teaching Critical Global Learning

## INTRODUCTION

Although the conceptual framework presented in this book offers a research-informed and flexible approach to teaching critical global learning, there will always be challenges and dilemmas to navigate in its implementation, regardless of context. Within this chapter, these challenges and dilemmas are framed as tensions which reflect where there can be conflict between competing considerations within practice.

During development and implementation of the conceptual framework, tensions arose as a result of attempts to match my practitioner aspirations for students' learning with the reality of the teaching context and the individual circumstances students brought to the learning space. While challenging, tensions also represent opportunities for both personal and professional growth through exploring how to best navigate them within our own individual contexts.

## TENSIONS

Berry (2008, p. 32) uses the idea of tensions within teacher education to:

capture the feelings of internal turmoil that many teacher educators experience in their teaching about teaching as they find themselves pulled in different directions by competing concerns, and the difficulties for teacher educators in learning to recognise and manage these opposing forces

While Berry's definition relates specifically to teacher education, the feeling of turmoil caused by competing concerns is not unique to this setting but can be found alongside other tensions in every context. Berry's definition mirrors my experience of navigating the exploration of my own practice which led to the conceptual framework for teaching critical global learning presented in this book. In my journey towards coming to know my practice better and make improvements to better support my students in their development of critical thinking skills in the context of GCE, my progress was impacted by challenges, tensions, and dilemmas which arose from competing considerations.

The tensions outlined in this chapter reflect my experiences and represent some considerations for other educators to be aware of when approaching the teaching of critical global learning. While the Planning Tool and the Model are the core outcomes of exploring my own practice, the tensions within this chapter demonstrate what I have learned about teaching critical global learning throughout the three-year research project. It is in the ongoing practice of navigating these challenges that my understanding of the implementation of critical global learning within higher education continues to be deepened.

While I cannot propose definitive solutions to the tensions identified in this chapter, I deepened my own reflexivity and improved my practices as a teacher through exploring and navigating responses to them. My navigation of these tensions throughout the three action research cycles was informed by an ongoing dialogue between my experiences, data collected from students, conversations with critical friends and colleagues, and a continual exploration of literature.

Some of the tensions I experienced were unique to my context of teacher education which gives rise to its own complexities. However, the majority of the tensions presented in this chapter reflect the nature of higher education more generally and so may be applicable to a wide audience exploring the implementation of critical global learning in different fields. I categorise the tensions I have experienced under three headings as follows:

#### Pedagogical Tensions

- The 'performance' of teaching vs. educator disposition;
- Rewarding critical thinking vs. pushing students beyond their comfort zone;

- Focusing on content and knowledge vs. the process of learning and skill development;
- Not honouring prejudiced perspectives by not including them vs. including all perspectives and modelling how to question them;

#### Student-Specific Tensions

- Students' individualised learning needs vs. teaching large student cohorts;
- Students' personal attitudes to justice vs. their future professional responsibilities;

#### Tensions Rooted in External Influences

- Students primed for critical thinking from their background vs. students unprepared for it;
- Students' perception of issues informed by the media and society vs. perspectives presented in GCE;
- Approach to learning which was successful in second level education vs. approach to learning promoted in higher education.

Each tension will be explored in respect of their origins in the research while also discussed in relation to where it aligns with or diverges from literature. This chapter will also highlight the impact which the two-part conceptual framework, including the Model outlined in Chapter Four and the Planning Tool outline in Chapter Five, can have on each tension, furthering our understanding of the implementation of critical global learning within higher education.

### *Pedagogical Tensions*

Pedagogical tensions are commonplace when teaching in any setting, consequently, this category of tensions is the largest. Although a wide variety of pedagogical tensions are frequently experienced by educators, I have selected just four tensions which represent those which have had the greatest impact on and significance for my own teaching practices.

*The 'Performance' of Teaching vs. Educator Disposition*

Throughout the three cycles of data collection my reflections consistently highlighted the impact my mood, enthusiasm, and wellbeing had on my teaching performance and the knock-on impact I perceived in student learning and engagement. Teaching in any setting requires a level of performance displayed through an educator's enthusiasm and energy in the classroom to engage learners and support their learning (Good & Brophy, 2008). However, the energy which educators have at their disposal to enhance their teaching can depend on many factors external to the classroom such as their wellbeing on a given day, and their personal or professional circumstances. Consequently, a tension exists between the benefits of enthusiastic, engaged teaching, and the changeableness of teacher-wellbeing given the myriad factors which can influence it.

McCallum et al., (2017, p. 3) posit that "teachers are the most important in-school factor contributing to student success, satisfaction and achievement". Furthermore, through an empirical study, Turner and Theilking (2019) determined that when educators focused on improving their wellbeing, there was a notable and significant impact on learning. When teacher-wellbeing is higher, teachers find themselves more present and engaged in the classroom and resultingly better able to recognise and respond to learners' needs which results in improved learning outcomes (Caufield, 2018; Turner & Theilking, 2019). Furthermore, high levels of teacher-wellbeing are often expressed in the classroom through an enthusiastic approach to teaching (Holmes, 2018; McCallum et al., 2017). König (2020, p. 1) posits that enthusiasm is communicated through "diverse behavioural expressions, such as nonverbal (e.g. gestures) and verbal (e.g. tone of voice) behaviours". They (ibid.) highlight that enthusiasm displayed by educators can impact on learner achievement, motivation, and enjoyment of their learning.

While an educators' enthusiasm can be a critical factor in supporting student learning, the authenticity of that enthusiasm also impacts on student engagement and learning. Keller et al. (2018) found a correlation between enjoyment of and engagement with lessons and the authenticity of the enthusiasm displayed by educators. Through their research they (ibid.) were able to show that learners could identify instances where educators were exaggerating their enthusiasm and that this led to lower levels of enjoyment and engagement with learning. Furthermore, through their research in higher education settings, Johnson and

Labelle (2017) identified learners' markers of authentic educators. They (ibid., p. 429) determined that authentic educators are “approachable, passionate, attentive, capable, and knowledgeable”. While admirable qualities, each of these behaviours can require significant effort and energy and be impacted by an educators' level of wellbeing on a given day. Additionally, Johnson and LaBelle (2017, p. 429) posit that “teachers who are authentically approachable do not simply go through the motions of being a teacher or acting professional; instead, they willingly share their lives with students and attempt to engage students in doing likewise”. This aspect of educator authenticity is significant to the fields of critical thinking and GCE which both promote self-reflection and encourage students to consider and share their own perceptions and values in the classroom.

It has been my experience that having a structured approach prepared for lectures supports both my teaching performance and my wellbeing. The structure of the Planning Tool enables me to ensure students have sufficient opportunities to engage with the materials being explored in a lesson even when my own wellbeing doesn't allow me to teach with the level of energy I would like. I am also enabled to focus on mitigating the impact of negative wellbeing on my teaching performance in the classroom by ensuring that by design, lessons have pre-determined opportunities for students to engage with their learning and there are prompt questions and critical responses built into the lessons and represented in the classroom environment as a reminder. On days when I have less energy and enthusiasm to share with students, I remain better able to ‘perform’ while teaching in the knowledge that I have a structured approach to lessons to rely on, which reduces my stress in relation to responding to unpredictability in the classroom. While there is no fool-proof or perfect solution to the challenges of performance while teaching, my experiences demonstrate that it is worth-while exploring the impact that developing a structured approach to teaching and learning can have on teaching performance and wellbeing.

### *Rewarding Critical Thinking vs. Pushing Students Beyond Their Comfort Zones*

While teaching I am always conscious of a fine line in my approach between rewarding criticality when I observe it and encouraging students to push beyond their comfort zones. This became especially apparent during the research process when I discussed sessions with a critical friend

who was also teaching on the same module and we noticed instances where I was satisfied when students demonstrated any level of criticality, but in a similar scenario, she was pushing students to develop their thinking or questioning further. While encouragement often supports student engagement and pushing them sometimes results in disengagement, by praising low levels of criticality students can incorrectly infer that they have done 'enough'. Good and Brophy (2008) caution against inauthentic praise or 'gushing', highlighting that this can confuse learners who require accurate feedback to progress their learning. Both my critical friend and I were conscious of some students' tendencies to become defensive and disengage from their learning when they felt challenged. In trying to mitigate against this reaction in students I have found it difficult to find the right balance between praise and encouragement, and pushing students further and possibly causing disengagement.

The defensiveness that we were aware of in our teaching reflects similar findings from research in multicultural education. Classroom teachers and student teachers were found to sometimes tend towards defensiveness when confronted with information or teaching approaches which they felt were a challenge to their lifestyle or identity (Lucas, 2010; Ukpokodu, 2002). Baily and Katradis (2016) also found that when engaging with issues of social justice, educators often shifted back and forth between engaging and disengaging from content that challenged their prior perceptions of the world. As established previously, one of the key aims of critical global learning is to encourage students to question orthodoxies. However, orthodoxies by definition are deeply engrained in society, and so to question them could be difficult for people who perceive some of them as foundational to their identity. This challenge to their identities and perception of the world could cause students to become defensive and disengaged if pushed too far.

In endeavouring to push students beyond their comfort zones I aimed to honour Boler's (1999) call to engage a 'pedagogy of discomfort' in the classroom which encourages students to embody a 'flexible sense of self' and consider 'disruptive possibilities' as they question the status quo. While recognising that this approach to teaching can result in strong emotional responses and ultimately disengagement, Faulkner (2012) encourages educators to use the pedagogical approach as a means to support learners to recognise where their reactions are rooted in

societal practices and to move beyond these in engaging in critical questioning. Although Faulkner's contention is encouraging, the lived reality of finding the optimum balance remains a challenging tension in practice.

This tension between rewarding and pushing students also reflects considerations in relation to the level of scaffolding to incorporate into teaching. The concept of the zone of proximal development devised by Vygotsky (1978) states that within this zone learners are supported to move from the unknown to the known through scaffolded support from a person with more knowledge than them, often an educator. Through scaffolded support and modelling, over time learners should progress to be able to master a task independently (Wass et al., 2010). Although the ultimate aim is that students become independent critical thinkers, due to the short timeframe available in individual modules, some students may not leave the zone of proximal development during their time with me and will need continued scaffolded support to learn and apply the skills of critical thinking beyond my classroom.

This tension contributes to our understanding of student motivation, participation, and achievement. Developing an understanding of the underlying factors which may cause students to become defensive and consequently disengaged in the classroom enables us as educators to continually reimagine the levels of support we offer students in response to their contributions during classes. An ongoing awareness of this tension can inform our continued navigation of the conditions for learning we set up in our classrooms and the pedagogy we employ, both crucial considerations within the Model and the Planning Tool. Furthermore, the Planning Tool can provide ongoing support in navigating this tension by providing regular opportunities for student learning to be scaffolded while also ensuring that students consistently have opportunities to work independently and challenge each other.

### *Focusing on Content and Knowledge vs. the Process of Learning and Skill Development*

Prior to developing and implementing the Planning Tool, when preparing for modules at the outset of a semester I would consider the overall module only from the perspective of the order I would cover topics in and the broad learning outcomes I was focusing on throughout. The majority of time spent planning would be focused on individual sessions. As there are so many topics to cover in GCE, each week I would focus

on a new topic and I centred my planning around the topics and the relevant content knowledge rather than broader consideration of the overall module experience for students. By introducing the Planning Tool, I was enabled to consider not only what knowledge the students would engage with in each session, but how I could support students to incrementally build up their skills throughout the module too. This new approach to planning highlighted the tension I was continually navigating between planning for the module as a whole, which included broad objectives but not the detail of how to achieve them, versus planning individual lessons, which focused on the practicality of facilitating learning each week but could easily lose sight of the bigger picture. The operational implications of this tension are found in the ongoing balancing act between focusing on knowledge and content delivery versus skill development and the process of learning. An emphasis on individual sessions takes a hyper focus on content, whereas approaching planning from the perspective of the overall module focuses predominantly on the process of learning and incremental skill development.

The tension between content delivery and development of skills, values, and attitudes is not unique to this study or context. Berlak and Berlak (1981) also highlight the dilemma facing educators in the way they conceptualise and present knowledge, having to decide between a focus on facts and information versus the process of thinking and reasoning. Additionally, this tension is connected to one of the potential downfalls of critical thinking; when overly focused on developing questioning skills at the expense of building a knowledge base, critical thinking can manifest as hostility or negativity (Zelnick, 2008). Fundamentally, a person's ability to engage in high quality critical thinking is dependent upon their depth of knowledge on the topic (Bailin et al., 1999). Furthermore, Standish (2012) shared his apprehension about the tendency for GCE to be overly focused on values and skills which he claims has resulted in a reduction in content knowledge. In his critique of common GCE approaches, Standish (2012) recommends a refocusing on topics in isolation to allow for learners to gain a greater depth of knowledge before attempting to make connections or develop critiques.

However, too strong a focus on content sharing and delivery is also cause for concern. In opposing the 'banking' approach to education, Freire (1970) advocates instead for an approach to education which promotes the invention and re-invention of knowledge through dialogue and debate. Freire's work encourages educators to think beyond didactic

means of teaching and rather than denouncing the teaching of all knowledge, Freire's approach encourages educators to be mindful of the way in which knowledge is presented to, and created with, learners. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that the educator was not the keeper of knowledge, but that valid information originates in all communities and groups. He (*ibid.*) encouraged a dialogical approach to teaching that encourages learners to engage with the information being shared rather than blindly accepting it.

The Model includes the development of a knowledge base as one of the four core critical global learning skills, ensuring that a focus on knowledge development is emphasised but not overly so as only one of four skills to focus on. Additionally, the Planning Tool attempts to address this tension in its lesson elements which include a focus on presenting content in a challenging way while providing opportunities for students to engage with that information and develop their reflection and questioning skills. Although the implementation of the Planning Tool helps to mitigate some of the operational challenges which arise from this tension, it is not a perfect solution. While focusing on the overall module helps me to ensure skills and values are incrementally built upon throughout the module, there is still a need to ensure appropriate and sufficient content is being delivered in each individual topic. As a GCE educator, there is a need to be able to teach about a wide variety of topics which I find challenging when approaching issues I feel less comfortable with and I rely on more knowledgeable colleagues in those instances to step in as a subject expert.

One of the core aims of the research was to identify opportunities and barriers which impacted on the implementations of critical global learning within my context. As outlined, the nature of GCE, given the wide breath of topics it encompasses, in combination with the practical restraints of a module limited by time can be a barrier. Furthermore, another barrier evident within this tension is the isolating nature of higher education due to definitive subject divisions. However, being able to reach out to others when you can identify a gap in your own knowledge or skillset is an opportunity which helps to ensure that not only does the module work as a whole but that students receive the best teaching on each topic area.

*Not Honouring Prejudiced Perspectives By Not Including Them vs. Including All Perspectives and Modelling How to Question Them*

Throughout my teaching I have always been aware that not all students hold the same values as those which are at the core of GCE. Students do not often openly vocalise their opposition but I am aware of their disagreement through their body language or through overheard comments or discussions. Although infrequent, instances where students express strong discriminatory viewpoints in the classroom have often overshadowed contributions which upheld the values of GCE. As an educator, I feel a responsibility to respond to what emerges in the classroom. However, I often struggle with this task. I have observed that at times students with diverging viewpoints seem to have their own perspectives strengthened by defending them against those presented by the module. As a result, I identified and struggled with the tension between not honouring prejudiced perspectives by not including them within my teaching versus including those divergent ideas as an opportunity to model how to respond to and critique them. The Radicalisation Awareness Network (2019), a branch of the European Commission, found that when students express prejudiced or far-right extremist views in the classroom, even if coming from a small proportion of students, the environment in the classroom can become uncomfortable. In a similar vein, Khan (2019) highlights the narrow line between free speech and hate speech by outlining that while freedom of speech is a precious right, when used to provoke hatred or division, it can be extremely damaging.

The inclusion of multiple diverging perspectives in the classroom is in line with critical thinking theory, which advocates for learners to examine diverse viewpoints and formulate responses (Bok, 2006; Dwyer et al., 2014; Paul & Elder, 2016). Following discussions with students and colleagues, I began to create more opportunities for students to share their perspectives as my research progressed, but continued to struggle to find appropriate ways to respond to discriminatory values which emerged. This challenge became an important factor in designing the Planning Tool which provided an opportunity that supported me to include opportunities for a variety of perspectives to be aired in the classroom, while ensuring that I was prepared with strategies and frameworks to challenge them if needed. However, it is not possible to accurately respond to all instances with large class groups, and it is inevitable that many perspectives will still go unnoticed and consequently unchallenged. It became clear

that the group and cohort sizes I was working with was a barrier which compromised my ability to respond to all views present in the classroom.

Encouraging the inclusion of a diversity of perspectives in the classroom, Pollard (2018) maintains that left-leaning classrooms can be intimidating spaces for learners who hold opposing views or values. He (ibid.) highlights that learners' capacity to develop critical thinking skills would be hampered in a space oriented towards only one perspective. Similarly, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (2019) encourage educators not to shy away from right-wing perspectives, but to engage in open conversations with those who express them. Additionally, Khan (2019) highlights that educators have a responsibility, due to their positions of power in the classroom, to confront the status quo and represent the voices of the marginalised. By including and exploring different perspectives on a topic both students and educators are enabled to consider the issue from different angles and to disrupt common narratives and one-sided stories through dialogue and debate.

Following reflection and discussions with colleagues and mentors, I made the decision to actively include dissenting and alternative perspectives in my teaching. I use it as an opportunity to model open discussion and questioning or challenging those perspectives if necessary or appropriate. This approach also provides space for students to share their variety of opinions and respond to each other's ideas. Although I am confident that the approach I designed is the right choice to support my students on their journey towards critical global learning, I remain apprehensive at times about my ability to respond appropriately when confronted with viewpoints I find challenging. My uneasiness is reflected in Shor and Freire's (1987, p. 61) contention that "because education is politics, it makes sense for the liberating teacher to feel some fear when he or she is teaching". Despite not having a catch-all solution for responding to challenging viewpoints, I remain convinced of the importance of consciously including dissenting viewpoints in the classroom and embrace the discomfort which necessarily comes with the exploration of complex, controversial, and contested topics.

### *Student-Specific Tensions*

The second category of tensions in this chapter is concerned with those tensions which relate specifically to students and the challenges inherent in responding to a diversity of individualised student needs and personal

responses to GCE. While variety within student cohorts is to be welcomed in the richness it can bring to discussions and experiences within the classroom, this diversity can also present challenges for educators struggling to support large numbers of students in an equitable way.

### *Students' Individualised Learning Needs vs. Teaching Large Student Cohorts*

Each student comes to the learning space with individual backgrounds and needs. However, when working with large numbers of students every week, it can be very challenging, and often impossible, to find ways to be responsive to the individuality of issues students experience. Indeed, this tension provides key considerations for understanding what factors can impact on student motivation, participation, and achievement. Large cohort and group sizes present a tension between the approach to teaching I endeavour to embody through building relationships with students and the practical implications of managing a cohort of such a large size.

Responding to student individuality is of critical importance within the context of promoting critical global learning. Topics can cause different responses from students depending on their own backgrounds and preconceived ideas related to the issues being explored. Some students can find it easy to take on board new ideas while others can react defensively when presented with topics that challenge their perceptions. Indeed, the topics involved in GCE can incite strong, and varied, emotions from all students irrespective of their background. The focus on controversial and sensitive topics within GCE often necessitate that students receive a significant level of support in their exploration and interpretation of them. When working with large groups within the context of a very large cohort, my ability to respond effectively to the individual and varied responses of students is always compromised, regardless of the intensity of their need or my own pedagogical beliefs.

When educators have the opportunity to engage with all students in the class, they can use the information they gain about student knowledge and perceptions to shape and inform their teaching. Woollacott et al., (2014, p. 747), refer to this knowledge as educators coming to know their students in “pedagogically meaningful ways”. Large group and cohort sizes limit my ability to inform my teaching in this way. Without this knowledge it can be easy to lack awareness of the variety of needs and experiences students bring to the teaching space.

Woollacott et al., (2014, p. 748), contend that “it is well known that the better you know the students you are teaching the better placed you are to help them in their learning”. Furthermore, Hornsby and Osman (2014) draw on a range of empirical research studies and assert that class size impacts on the quality of the learning environment. In particular, they link large class sizes with low performance. Ultimately, Hornsby and Osman (2014) posit that the key challenge posed by large class sizes and large student cohorts is the transition from learning styles used in secondary education to those promoted within higher education. In higher education students are usually asked to engage in problem solving and critical thinking skills rather than memorisation of facts or rote learning typical of secondary education. Large class sizes lend themselves to a more didactic teaching style which can inhibit an educator’s ability to nurture the very skills they are trying to promote (Hornsby & Osman, 2014). Resultingly, not only is teaching large groups not conducive to the promotion of higher order cognitive skills such as critical thinking it can actively inhibit the development of skills that rely on engagement, dialogue, and feedback to flourish.

To counteract the challenge of getting to know students as individuals within large cohorts, Woollacott et al. (2014) recommend getting to know the ‘idealised types’ of students in your class by identifying the various ways that students conceptualise or experience different topics. Without opportunities to come to know students as individuals and respond accordingly, the approach recommended by Woollacott et al. (2014) allows educators to prepare for a variety of potential student responses by observing and categorising what they notice generally in their students’ engagement. The development and implementation of the Planning Tool has assisted me in focusing on developing relationships with students in the ways promoted within the Model. Additionally, using small group activities during each class enables me to circulate around the room and observe and interact with a large number of students and notice trends in their learning and engagement. These two approaches support me in getting to know the various ways that students conceptualise and experience topics, which I am able to then use to inform my planning and teaching.

*Students' Personal Attitudes to Justice vs. Their Future Professional Responsibilities*

Within my approach to teaching GCE, I believe it is always important to encourage students to develop their own understandings and attitudes concerning the topics that are addressed. This approach is in line with the principles of critical thinking and of GCE which promote self-reflection and follow democratic ideologies in honouring student voice. However, I also make an effort to guide students towards values and principles that are in line with GCE such as justice and human rights. As part of this approach, diverging attitudes need to be problematised and questioned during classes. Although students are encouraged to consider justice issues through the values being promoted, they remain free to align themselves with a value-set of their choice. I have found that many students tend to distance themselves from issues and fail to incorporate the complexity around justice issues in their consideration of them, consequently continuing to approach them from simplistic perspectives. While this attitude is problematic, albeit common at a societal level, I feel that it presents a specific tension when juxtaposed with students' future professional responsibilities. My students are studying to become teachers, and as classroom teachers these they will have a significant impact on shaping societal viewpoints and attitudes towards justice issues which could serve to either perpetuate stereotypes and unjust systems or begin to question, challenge, and dismantle them. A similar tension can be related to other professional fields in which students are studying for future careers which will involve interaction with the public, and possibly shaping or influencing perspectives of those they meet.

The distancing and simplification of issues I have observed from some students is not a reaction that is unique to this setting. Often when learning about complex and difficult topics in relation to injustice, there can be a tendency for people to gloss over the historical context of current inequality, and in particular the responsibility of wealthier Western nations for the underdevelopment of other countries and groups (Andreotti, 2006; Straubhaar, 2015). The oversimplification of inequality becomes problematic when the division between rich and poor is presented as a result of luck rather than unearned privilege for some at the expense of others (Straubhaar, 2015). This perception is mirrored in findings from research in both the UK and in Ireland where it was found that the general public often viewed poverty as an internal issue for countries in the global south and had limited knowledge or awareness of the role of

Western countries in perpetuating and reproducing poverty (Amárach, 2013; Darnton & Kirk, 2011). Although students are presented with this broader context within the modules, many still fail to adapt their own thinking to reflect this. Presenting inequality as an accident of luck is reflective of the approach often seen in media and charitable campaigns (McCurdy, 2016) and so it is not surprising to see it also reflected in students' attitudes. However, it is harmful as the perpetuation of an oversimplification of development can hamper the potential for change and meaningful action because it negates the need to consider personal and collective responsibility.

In an effort to counteract this reaction from students, I provided additional opportunities for students to engage in self-reflection with the incorporation of the Planning Tool. The Planning Tool enables me to ensure that self-reflection features as a component of all sessions. Additionally, I work to focus on ensuring the connections we each have to systems of power are made more explicit, aiming to counteract the idea that international power structures are separate from our everyday lives. This approach was a crucial component of the Model which focuses on understanding power relations when developing a knowledge base. The challenging approach to content delivery according to the Planning Tool is underpinned in all sessions by this structural understanding of inequality. When this approach is applied to teaching and learning, students don't tend to show the same tendency to oversimplify or misinterpret justice issues. While it is not possible to claim that this tendency gets removed entirely, I have found evidence of students being more open to grappling with the complexity of justice issues. The improvement I have experienced in students' attitudes to and interpretation of justice issues highlights that the approaches I adopted which prompted this change were key factors which contributed to student participation and achievement.

Definitions of GCE, and related educational approaches, consistently include the need for learners to make personal connections with what they are learning and come to understand their place in the world (Irish Aid, 2021; Bourn, 2015a; Danesh, 2008; Tormey, 2003). From a GCE perspective, Shah and Brown (2010) and Andreotti (2006) highlight the transformative potential of self-reflection, stressing that self-reflection and an openness to challenging your viewpoints can be the catalyst which leads to engagement in change for a more just and sustainable world. While self-reflection is a core critical thinking skill and an important element of

GCE, it must be acknowledged that it can be unsettling for the learner who may find themselves confronted with uncomfortable considerations about their own prejudices and place in the world (Bourn, 2015a).

The contrasting interpretations and attitudes that students emerge with from their engagement with GCE can be of critical importance to their future careers due to the ways in which they may influence or contribute to shaping others perceptions. Consequently, when considering students as future professionals, there is a need to continue to challenge the normative narratives around justice and challenge students to understand and care about unequal power distribution and recognition and become aware of the way in which systems perpetuate and maintain unequal power structures (Waldron et al., 2012).

### *Tensions Rooted in External Influences*

Some of the challenges which emerged during this research project related to tensions which were beyond my control as they originated outside of the classroom and related to students' personal lives and societal influences. All three tensions within this category help to build our understanding in relation to the factors which contribute to student motivation, participation, and achievement within critical global learning.

#### *Students Primed for Critical Thinking from Their Background vs. Students Unprepared for It*

In addition to the impact that my teaching approach has on students learning, I have also noticed that there are differences in students' intrinsic tendency to engage with critical thinking. Irrespective of the levels of enthusiasm, authenticity, and energy that I brought to my teaching, there are always some students who are consistently engaged and enthusiastic about developing their criticality and others who tend to be less eager or who disengage from both individual sessions and the module as a whole. This disparity reflects a tension for my teaching in identifying approaches that work for both students who are easy to reach and those who are more difficult to engage. While I noticed an improvement following the implementation of the Planning Tool as I was working to ensure sessions were consistently engaging and followed a predictable format for students, this tension is still present in my practice as some students always remain uninterested.

The differences in students' enthusiasm presents difficulties for me pedagogically. However, the differences in students' levels of preparedness for criticality also poses a challenge for them in their learning. Where students arrive in the learning space with prior experience of critical thinking and an interest in developing their skills, they tend to find the modules less challenging and more enjoyable than those who did not have relevant prior experiences. In conversation with a critical friend, we concluded that one of the influencing factors which led to students being ill-prepared to engage in critical thinking was the lack of diversity within the programme. We observed that students were often not familiar with encountering a diversity of perspectives which would lead them to re-evaluate or challenge their own. This is not surprising within my context of teacher education as the teaching profession, especially at primary level, is well documented internationally to be very homogenous (Hyland, 2012; Keane & Heinz, 2015). Indeed, in Ireland, the overwhelming majority of students in ITE are white, Irish, Catholic, female, able-bodied, and middle-class (Keane & Heinz, 2015). My experience of this homogeneity has been that it limits the students' learning experiences due to the lack of diversity of experiences and perspectives being shared amongst peers. The conclusions that I have come to are mirrored by research which concluded that exposure to diversity is a critical influencing factor in the development of complex thought processes such as critical thinking for students in higher education (Loes et al., 2012; Pascarella et al., 2014). Furthermore, Ryan (2013) posits that reflective thinking is not intuitive, and that student competency in self-reflection should not be taken for granted. Indeed, I have observed that students' prior experiences of engaging with reflection can impact on their competency and comfort levels. Students also frequently talked about their prior experiences of education, particularly at second level, not helping them to develop criticality or reflective skills, which is highlighted in a further tension later in this chapter.

As an educator, awareness of the factors which impact on students critical thinking tendencies is very important in informing my planning. In acknowledging that many students come to higher education unprepared for critical thinking, and that ITE cohorts are often homogenous which can impede criticality, it is crucial to then accept responsibility for ensuring students learning includes exposure to diversity and a slow, structured, and supportive approach to building criticality skills. I have found that the use of the Planning Tool supports students to make progress at their

own pace and on their own terms in relation to their criticality due to the structured and paced approach it encourages and gives rise to in practice.

*Student Perception of Issues from the Media and Society vs. Perspectives Presented in GCE*

An additional factor which impacts on student's preparedness for criticality is the conceptualisation of justice issues and global development which is pervasive in the media and society generally and which students often bring with them into their learning. Students are asked to share the preconceived ideas they hold about justice issues from the outset of modules which often appear heavily influenced by the images and narratives they had been exposed to through media and regularly in school textbooks. The perspectives presented within GCE are often in contrast to those presented in charity advertisements and other media representations of development issues. It can be challenging for students to find themselves confronted with perspectives which contrast with their prior conceptualisations and this can cause defensiveness or disengagement. This tension requires teacher educators to navigate the divergent conceptualisations of development and justice issues in ways that do not alienate students but broaden their awareness and challenges them to question their perceptions.

Andreotti and deSouza (2008) highlight that we all arrive in the learning space with our own cultural baggage. This means that our perspectives are socially, culturally, and historically situated which can influence how we all engage with new knowledge (ibid.). Similarly, Keating (2007, p. 122) proclaims that we are all born into "a reality filled with customs, stories, and myths that have already been recirculated countless times". The 'cultural baggage' that learners bring to their learning in GCE is often in the form of a charity mentality, which involves learning about the 'other' and 'helping' them (Tallon, 2012). Simpson (2016) posits that this mentality has not developed or significantly changed in decades. This approach to development and justice issues is problematic as it places the power to enact change in the hands of those in the global north and presents an image of the global south as helpless (Simpson, 2016). This attitude is neo-colonial and is problematic in its oversimplification of development and in its erasure of our responsibility in the global north for creating and perpetuating systems of inequality.

Although a charity mentality can be critiqued as problematic and potentially harmful, it remains prevalent amongst the general public, and I have found it to often be a cornerstone of students' identity as a 'good person'. The perception that engaging in charity is inherently a 'good' act is widespread amongst students and reinforced through the media and often within their prior experiences of formal education in primary and post-primary schooling. Consequently, to challenge this perception can be confronting for students and can sometimes lead to defensiveness or disengagement due to a lack of confidence in or connection to what they are being taught. The goal is never to alienate students, but to find ways to invite them to engage with the content and come to their own conclusions following genuine reflection. This can be significantly challenging and represents the root of this tension.

Hunt (2020) identifies that a key characteristic of a global learning school is that it has adopted a critical social justice approach. Moving away from a charity mentality and a focus on fundraising as a solution to issues of justice and inequality is promoted by many as a core tenet of GCE (Andreotti, 2006; Bourn, 2015b; Hunt, 2020; Simpson, 2016). In contrast to a charity approach, a social justice approach to education requires critical engagement and a commitment to continually questioning power structures and justice (Hunt, 2020).

Gallant (2008) maintains that power structures are often established and advanced through dominant discourses and highlights that in acknowledging this, we can also conclude that they can therefore be changed through examining, questioning, and redefining the discourses which shape our lives. GCE encourages learners to 'open their eyes to the reality of the world' (CoE, 2002) which highlights it as an educational approach which is committed to unravelling, challenging, and retelling commonly held perspectives through uncovering root causes behind issues of injustice. Accordingly, GCE holds the critical potential to counteract this tendency by encouraging students to unpack and question prevalent orthodoxies they encounter.

Consequently, a social justice approach is strongly aligned with critical thinking as it requires teachers and learners alike to engage in questioning their actions and evaluating the most appropriate and effective approaches to take rather than engaging in an action mindlessly, or because it is a tradition within an institution or family. Working with students to highlight that fundraising or traditional 'charity' actions are not ruled out, but should simply be evaluated alongside other actions can help to encourage

participation from students who may otherwise disengage when their perception of what is ‘good’ or ‘right’ is challenged.

The Model ensures that both reflection and questioning are core skills which are continually developed within critical global learning which can help learners to develop the skills to challenge their prior conceptions in a structured and supportive manner. Furthermore, retaining a focus on values, a critical component of both the Model and the Planning Tool, ensures that students have opportunities to learn where there may be a tension between values and actions. It is commonplace for people to verbalise a commitment to values of equity and justice, but be unaware of the contradictions between these values and traditional charity-oriented actions. The approach to presenting challenging content in both direct and indirect ways within the Planning Tool can be very supportive in ensuring learners are familiar with and comfortable being challenged on an ongoing basis.

*Approach to Learning Which Was Successful in Second Level Education vs. the Approach to Learning Promoted in Higher Education*

Throughout the research, students repeatedly highlighted the significant difference between the approach to learning that was required during their secondary school education, and the critical thinking they were being asked to engage with in higher education. Most students who participated in this study had recently come from the Leaving Certificate Programme<sup>1</sup> (LCP) where they performed well above average in order to secure a place on their bachelors degree programme. Students in this study often cited the limiting influence the LCP had on them and their resultant challenging experiences of trying to engage with critical thinking in higher education. I found myself navigating the tension between the differences in teaching approaches that students were familiar with, and which led to significant academic success for them, and those common in higher education. Students also struggled to navigate this tension. They were challenged to rethink their approach to education and to learn new skills in order to succeed in higher education.

<sup>1</sup> The Leaving Certificate Programme is comprised of the final two years of post-primary education in Ireland, culminating in a series of state-run exams which dictate learner’s eligibility for entry into higher education.

It is well documented that the LCP in Ireland, which emphasises the importance of critical and creative thinking in its documentation (NCCA, 2009), in practice is heavily reliant on memory recall rather than higher order thinking skills (Burns et al., 2018). Shortcomings of the LCP can be aligned with a lack of emphasis on ‘higher order skills’ which O’Leary and Scully (2018, p. 2) define as inclusive of “understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating various forms of information”. They (ibid.) juxtapose these skills with the recall of factual information, the predominant skill usually associated with the LCP.

The Irish education system in general is held in high regard internationally, with post-primary pupils consistently performing above the OECD average in international testing of literacy, mathematics, and science (OECD, 2018). However, O’Leary and Scully (2018) highlight the question posed by many in the field of education, namely whether the LCP is fit for purpose. In their overview of senior cycle education, the NCCA state that education should contribute to “the promotion of social cohesion, the recovery and growth of the economy and the adoption of the principle of sustainability in all aspects of development” (NCCA, 2009, p. 6). They (ibid.) envision that through engagement with the LCP, pupils should be supported to develop as people, as citizens, and as learners. However, there is a clear tension between the vision the NCCA declare and the experience of pupils on the ground. If the purpose of the LCP is to contribute to social cohesion and support pupil development, the focus on high stakes summative testing of lower-order recall skills does not match this goal. The focus of the LCP on memory recall is characteristic of international approaches to high stakes testing which typically do not assess criticality or other higher order skills due to a focus on performativity (Ball, 2016). In order to get a place in higher education, students have to refine their memory recall skills and not employ creative or critical thinking during assessments to achieve high grades. They are then at a disadvantage when entering higher education and being informed that this approach will not help them to succeed and are instead asked to employ criticality in their assessment submissions. Thus, students’ prior experiences of high stakes testing impacts on their motivation, participation, and achievement within critical global learning when they come to higher education.

From my observations, reflections, and data generated by students in classes, focus groups, and surveys, it has become clear that many students can overcome the challenge of adapting to a new approach to learning.

However, it remains critical for me in my practice to be considerate of the transition on which students are embarking. I find that the Planning Tool supports me in ensuring that I am consistent in providing students with opportunities to practise their critical thinking skills, and to build on these skills incrementally throughout a semester, something which they frequently cited during the research study as crucial for them in developing their critical thinking skills.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I identified the core tensions which arose during data collection for this study. Although unable to offer definitive solutions to these tensions, by contextualising my own findings within broader literature, I offer considerations in relation to the implications of these tensions. Throughout this chapter I have identified where my navigation of each tension has contributed to my understanding and experience of teaching critical global learning. While the tensions within this chapter originated within my study, they represent challenges and opportunities for reflection for others working within higher education, specifically within the fields of critical thinking and GCE.

It is in the ongoing practice of navigating the challenges which arise in research and practice that our understanding of the implementation of critical global learning is deepened. While I cannot propose definitive solutions to the tensions I identified, I deepened my own reflexivity and improved my practices as a teacher educator through exploring and navigating responses to them.

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## CHAPTER 7

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# Implementing the Conceptual Framework in Your Context

### INTRODUCTION

As the final chapter in this book, this chapter brings together many of the ideas presented throughout previous chapters and presents an argument for developing a discussion culture within your various learning spaces. In outlining the argument of this chapter, both the opportunities for furthering critical global learning, and the inherent barriers educators often face will be outlined and explored. Additionally, this chapter will also return to the adaptable and flexible nature of the conceptual framework by offering a rationale for and considerations around how to contextualise critical global learning for readers own contexts. This focus will include recommendations for how the framework can be used and what actions could be taken next both by educators and researchers.

### DEVELOPING A DISCUSSION CULTURE

While the conceptual framework is complex and nuanced, one of the core outcomes of its' implementation is the development of a 'discussion culture' in the classroom. In this way the practical manifestation of critical global learning is a discussion culture in the classroom. The phenomena of 'classroom culture' is widely written about and researched, but is commonly used to denote the variety of interconnected factors

which influence, create, and shape the learning environment and consequently student experience of learning in a classroom. The culture which is cultivated in a classroom shapes the learning experiences of students in a variety of ways; it can determine the nature of relationships, it can influence the roles that each party takes on, it can set up participation patterns for students, and it can impact on motivation and interest in learning (Quay & Quaglia, 2004; Singleton et al., 2024). While all parties have a responsibility for the culture cultivated in a classroom, the teacher has the most significant impact in shaping the type of culture they want to promote to pupils. Teachers shape what happens in the classroom through the introduction of activities and tasks, but also through the values that are made both implicit and explicit through their practice, and by shaping how learning is viewed through the ways in which different ideas and responses get praise and encouragement versus those which get critiqued, setting up ideals of what success looks like and identifying the educational philosophy shaping classroom practice.

Establishing a ‘discussion culture’ in the classroom for me meant setting up the learning environment to support discussion, engagement, and interaction as the norm. This was done in a variety of ways. Chiefly, nurturing a discussion culture has meant ensuring that students expect to engage in dialogue and debate when entering the classroom. Establishing classroom routines, such as those suggested by the Planning Tool, helps to ensure that students can expect to engage in discussion in a variety of ways in every lesson, this routine helps students to incrementally build their discussion skills and grow their confidence and comfort in engaging in discussion through continued, reliable exposure and practice. Furthermore, a discussion culture describes a learning environment in which students are given the opportunity to practise critical thinking in a supported manner, where they feel safe to share ideas and try out new skills. The structured nature of lessons which emerged from implementing the Planning Tool also supports students’ motivation, participation, and their development of critical global learning skills as it adds a level of predictability to my classes by setting up expectations about the learning culture. This reflects Kyriacou’s (2014) contention that when students are clear on the expectations of them, it raises their participation, engagement, and learning outcomes. Additionally, the structured approach has allowed me to develop routines, such as the introductory reflection outlined in Chapter Five, which helps students to focus their learning from the outset.

A discussion culture is not built purely through the provision of discussion-based activities however, but is also dependent on the relationships built in the classroom, the learning environment fostered, and the values which are nurtured, the three components of the pre-conditions for learning threaded through both the Model and Planning Tool. I found that it was important to pay attention not just to *what* students were learning but *how* the learning took place. Within the Planning Tool, the inclusion of pre-conditions for learning ensures that I focus not just on what takes place during lessons, but also attend to the learning experiences of students. Focusing on the pre-conditions for learning ensures that I am being mindful to develop relationships with students, ensures that I pay attention to both the physical and psychosocial learning environments, and threads a values-lens throughout my teaching. Attention to each of these supports students' engagement and learning by helping students to feel welcome in the classroom, and ensures I focus my teaching on being intentionally inviting while also transparent about the values I want to promote. Ultimately, students who feel comfortable in their learning environment are more likely to engage in and succeed in their learning, building the skills that are reinforced by the learning environment.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR AND ENABLERS OF CRITICAL GLOBAL LEARNING

While the conceptual framework presented in this book was developed and is continually used within dedicated GCE modules, critical global learning has application beyond this setting, and indeed a discussion culture can be established in any educational setting. The core principles of critical global learning have relevance to many different subject areas and the skillset which the conceptual framework aims to develop would be of use to students studying in a wide variety of disciplines. If we are to accept the premise that a key purpose of education is to prepare learners to be active and responsible citizens on their chosen paths beyond our classrooms, the establishment of a discussion culture to cultivate the skills of critical global learning can support this goal. Whether studying to enter a specific profession, building general workplace skills, or studying in the humanities, critical global learning skills can support learners to apply their learning to a broader context which is cognisant of real-world problems and solutions. With the aim of preparing students for life after and

beyond education, a knowledge base which is founded on an acknowledgement of the complex and contested nature of knowledge is crucial to enable learners to analyse, interpret, and make decisions about information they encounter and to inform their interpretations of the world. Furthermore, building the skills to question orthodoxies, self-reflect, and use a values-lens to interpret what they encounter supports learners to build lifelong habits which support them to engage with new information or situations with a critical lens. The ability to engage critically with new scenarios is a valued skill across disciplines which enables problem solving and supports a responsive, proactive approach valued within many professions.

In Ireland, we are fortunate to be in a position where GCE has support from multiple government departments, namely the Departments of Foreign Affairs and of Education. We have multiple policy documents guiding education at different levels and in different contexts which make explicit mention of GCE, and many more which engender the core values and approaches of GCE, thus enabling and legitimising opportunities for the widespread integration of GCE into education in different settings and contexts. Consideration of the implied purpose of education being promoted within policy documents opens up opportunities for integrating critical global learning into different education settings beyond those which include explicit GCE modules or courses. It is common across the world for educational policies to mention equality, human rights, problem solving, and critical thinking in their objectives. These instances represent opportunities for educators to justifiably incorporate critical global learning into their work, regardless of the discipline or course. When we consider education as a whole, all courses should be able to address the overall purposes of education and incorporate the skills which education systems aim to instil in learners. Indeed, the skills outlined in Chapter 4 are presented in a broad manner to enable them to be adapted to fit diverse contexts and programmes.

Additionally, the challenges faced by all in the global community present a significant opportunity to justify the necessity of incorporating critical global learning into the breath of education programmes on offer in higher education. Challenges we all face such as the impacts of climate change, increased international migration, unstable living costs, global conflict, and others must impact on the approach we take to education. Education cannot exist in isolation but must be responsive to and incorporate awareness of the realities facing society beyond our classrooms. All

professions and all aspects of society are ultimately impacted by the extent to which we have become interdependent and interconnected globally. Incorporation of critical global learning, through the establishment of a discussion culture, into the breath of higher education offers an opportunity to ensure learners are developing the skills which will support them within their future professions and roles in society to be responsive to global challenges, to be self-aware, and to make informed and critical decisions focused on just and sustainable solutions to complex problems.

From a practical perspective, the most significant support which enabled my teaching of critical global learning and the establishment of a discussion culture in my classroom was the opportunity to work collaboratively a colleague who was also a subject expert in GCE and an experienced educator. This opportunity provided me with a sounding board to tease out ideas, concerns, and tensions. Working together, we were able to challenge each other and draw on our individual strengths to improve outcomes for all students. While I designed both the Model and the Planning Tool, along with the majority of the lessons, my colleague provided invaluable feedback which I incorporated regularly and which enhanced the development of the conceptual framework. Furthermore, as I had a close relationship with her, I was able to be honest and vulnerable about my concerns and fears. This level of honesty in our conversations allowed us to tease out difficult issues and helped me to progress my practice beyond what I believe I could have achieved alone. Working collaboratively offers an opportunity to engage in the teaching of critical global learning in a supported and engaging manner. The stakes are lowered when we have support and can share challenges and concerns with trusted colleagues. This approach becomes even more possible through professional networks and the relationships made possible through online connections with colleagues working in different settings.

## BARRIERS TO CRITICAL GLOBAL LEARNING

Although the framework in this book aims to present a practical and widely applicable approach to the incorporation of critical global learning in different settings, there remain a number of barriers which make its inclusion in higher education a challenge. Indeed, there will be unique barriers that many of you will face which are specific to your contexts and which limit your ability to establish a discussion culture. These may

include structural or procedural issues which hinder the practicality of incorporating a discussion culture into your practice. For example, the challenge of student numbers, and consequently class sizes is one of the more significant challenges I continue to face in incorporating a discussion culture into my own practice. I have found that working with a large cohort of students is a barrier to students' own critical global learning as it is not possible for me to form personal relationships with each of them, or to draw on knowledge of their backgrounds and strengths to scaffold their learning. This challenge informed the development of the Planning Tool which required flexibility in responding to a wide variety of student experiences and needs. Not only was the size of the student cohort a challenge, but so too was the socio-cultural makeup of the group. The limited cultural, religious, ethnic, or class diversity within the student cohort meant that students were typically drawing on very similar framings and experiences when contributing during classes. This meant that there was additional work to provide alternative perspectives that might have naturally emerged within a more diverse cohort.

External influences, such as students' socio-cultural backgrounds, can both support or hinder students' learning. While the inclusion of external influences within the Model is informed by literature, I also experienced the impact that external influences were having on students' learning as I endeavoured to implement both the Model and the Planning Tool within my teaching when students' personal backgrounds acted as both barriers and enablers in the classroom. As outlined in Chapter 6, some students' life experiences, family or educational backgrounds prepared them to be pre-disposed to criticality and the values of GCE, whereas for other students, the same factors acted as barriers. Some students had succeeded educationally prior to attending higher education despite not employing criticality, or brought values from their social or family backgrounds which diverged from the values of GCE. This made it more challenging for them to engage with the content and skills of critical global learning. As an educator, you have no control over the socio-cultural backgrounds of your students or how these will impact both on their ability to develop as critical global learners, and how they will relate to others and act in a classroom setting. This is a significant and unpredictable challenge which must be navigated on an ongoing basis, and which will be unique to each group you work with.

Additionally, while global challenges are listed above as a motivating factor, or opportunity to inspire the inclusion of critical global learning

throughout education, they can also be a barrier to its inclusion. The extent of challenges facing global communities can be overwhelming for many and can often lead to educators and learners alike choosing to turn away from what is happening in the world, choosing instead to stay within a context where they feel they have more control. This potential apathy can make it challenging to motivate students to engage with critical global learning when they have experienced trauma or difficulty when engaging with global issues or challenges in their past. However, apathy is not the only response to global challenges that can cause issues in our classrooms. The rise of support for political parties with narrow nationalistic agendas, and the related rise in xenophobic and populist rhetoric across societies may also be seen in our classrooms. Students can bring with them values and perspectives which challenge or differ significantly from those being promoted or presented by critical global learning. While this can be a learning opportunity and a chance to explore multiple perspectives, it can also pose a challenge for educators who find their personal values and experiences challenged in the room. This tension was explored further in Chapter 6.

Furthermore, in an age where fake news and both mis- and dis-information are becoming normalised and truth is beginning to lose meaning in different spaces this work becomes more important, but also even more challenging. As educators we can find ourselves fighting against what is happening in society and trends internationally in relation to how knowledge and truth are viewed and experienced from our classrooms. Indeed, we are not removed or working in isolation from how knowledge, truth, and thinking are being conceptualised and used in different parts of the world. Societal and global trends in relation to thinking and knowledge do inevitably reach and influence our classrooms, and may mean that creating a discussion culture might be more of a challenge within your context than it otherwise would be if you are working with students with different conceptualisations of knowledge and truth.

Further challenges to critical global learning are linked to the tension between the stated purpose of education, and the contextual limitations many educators find themselves working within. In light of the humanistic, civic, economic, and furthering social equity and justice purposes of education (Spiel et al., 2018) outlined in Chapter 1, it is crucial to acknowledge that rigid structures of a formal education system, or curricula that can take multiple decades to update can be significant barriers. The systems and structures we work within can act as a barrier

when they do not align with our stated aims of education. Telling a teacher, or a teacher believing, that the purpose of education is to make the world a better place is laudable, but is made significantly more challenging to enact when they must then work within rigid educational structures which often don't afford teachers the freedom to be flexible in how they present knowledge about the world or how they explore complexity and controversy in the world. This can be a more significant challenge within primary and post-primary education than in higher education due to the structured, and often prescriptive, approach to curricula and programmes in those contexts.

However, it is common for educators in all contexts to find themselves over-burdened with new initiatives, growing administrative tasks, and ever-evolving programmatic requirements, while at the same time their students often find themselves over-timetabled and over-assessed. Within this restrictive context, it is understandably challenging to both find the time for, and justify the focus on, yet another approach or initiative such as critical global learning. While I can't solve the problems of having too little time in the day or week, what I would encourage you to consider are the ways in which developing a discussion culture to support critical global learning in your classroom could support you to meet diverse curricular and programmatic requirements, or how it could enhance your approach to many other initiatives.

### CONTEXTUALISING CRITICAL GLOBAL LEARNING FOR YOUR OWN CONTEXT

Ultimately, engaging with the teaching of critical global learning necessitates an open mind and a commitment to actively and continually evaluating your personal and professional beliefs and practices. Teaching critical global learning is both personally and professionally challenging when engaged with authentically as continued genuine reflexive practice can often expose us as 'living contradictions', highlighting where there are contradictions or inconsistencies between our beliefs about the world or education and our practices in our own classrooms. However, I have found the process of engaging with critical global learning to be hugely rewarding and beneficial, I can see the impact not only in my students but in my own practice and self-awareness.

Within Chapter 3, I outlined some of the ways in which the conceptual framework from this book could be adapted for use in different contexts,

chiefly this may involve incorporating additional components to aspects of the Model or Planning Tool, or indeed removing or editing existing ones. Depending on your context and your beliefs about education and in particular about GCE and critical thinking, you may have different interpretations or applications of any of the skills or sub-skills within the Model. Additionally, while I included examples of how the Planning Tool has been implemented in my context, there are endless alternative approaches which could be used to implement the lesson elements and pre-conditions for learning from the Planning Tool and indeed to track or measure the skills from the Model. Finally, the way in which external influences will impact on your implementation of a discussion culture will be highly context dependent and will evolve and change over time in response to societal changes, this component will need continual vigilance and tracking.

In terms of next steps, if you wish to adapt and use the conceptual framework within your own setting, you must start by committing to learning, to being open to personal change to your beliefs, understandings, opinions, or practices, to being open to being wrong and to finding contradictions in your practice and your beliefs, and accepting these as natural but committing to addressing them. The following steps may offer an approach which supports your journey to using the framework in your own practice to embed the teaching of critical global learning:

*Step One: Come to Know Yourself, Your Beliefs and Your Understandings Better*

The conceptualisations of critical thinking, GCE and ultimately critical global learning presented in this book are mine. They are the result of careful reflection, continued and rigorous review of literature, and ongoing conversations with friends and colleagues to help me distil my thinking and identify what my beliefs and opinions are. As a first step to considering how you might incorporate critical global learning into your own practice, I recommend spending time getting to know your own beliefs and come to a clear and informed decision about the definitions of GCE, critical thinking, and in due course critical global learning for yourself. An understanding of these things must be informed in the first instance by clarity in relation to what you believe to be the purpose of education and the impact you believe it can and should have for individuals as well as broader society.

In order to engage with this step, I would recommend first familiarising yourself with literature. While there are many definitions and considerations presented in this book, particularly in Chapters 1 and 2, there are many others which could also be considered. Exploring what others believe in relation to the purpose of education, and the myriad ways in which both GCE and critical thinking have been interpreted will help you to make decisions in relation to your own beliefs and definitional understandings. The exercise of having to write out a personal definition of GCE, critical thinking, or education is one I use with my students to help them to clarify their thinking, identify potential contradictions, and come to know themselves and their beliefs more clearly. As outlined earlier in this book, Palmer (1998) advocates for teachers coming to know ourselves better in order to be more responsive and present for and with our students. The more we can develop our awareness of our own values and beliefs, and how they inform our conceptualisations, and ultimately practices, of education, the more impactful and authentic our teaching can be.

*Step Two: Consider How Each Element of the Framework ‘Lands’  
with You*

Once you are firm in your beliefs, values, and understandings of GCE, critical thinking, and education, you can examine the two-part conceptual framework in a new light. Rather than reading for understanding, I encourage you to read about each element of both the Model and the Planning Tool and notice what your reactions to them are. You may find that some of the elements naturally align with your own educational approach, where others may diverge from your values or beliefs about education. While it is helpful to notice alignments, I encourage you to sit with any instances where you notice discomfort. It may ultimately mean you removing elements from my framework to create a version of the framework you wish to implement yourself, but it may also be an opportunity for you to broaden or expand your previous conceptualisations around education, GCE, or critical thinking. All reactions will offer useful insights and valuable learning opportunities in deepening your own understandings of critical global learning and moving to conceptualise how you wish to incorporate it into your own approaches.

### *Step Three: Get to Know Your Context*

The context you work within is unique, and many aspects of it are likely to be beyond your control. Rather than yearning for an ideal scenario, coming to know and understand the possibilities and limitations of your own reality will enable you to develop a realistically implementable and sustainable practice. Consider first what the key defining issues are for your context. These will look very different for everyone. While my work takes place within ITE at higher education, the framework should be adaptable for use in much broader contexts. You may work in formal, or non-formal education, with different age groups, different sized groups, online or in person. As outlined earlier in this chapter, an enabler for me was that I teach on explicit GCE modules, your subject area will impact what is reasonable and possible also. Consider the goals and objectives of the course, programme, or module you work on, and how these impact on your work and their potential impact on your ability to implement critical global learning. Very often the aims of educational programmes can be enablers depending on their underlying beliefs about education, but at times they can limit our ability to develop a discussion culture and engage with critical global learning if they align with a conflicting vision of education.

You will need to identify where these align with or diverge from your personal beliefs about education and conceptualisation of the core tenets and aims of GCE and critical thinking as explored in step one. By identifying where there may be barriers, you will be enabled to consider what adaptations you will need to make to the conceptual framework in order to be genuinely responsive to your own practice, enabling you to develop a framework which is context-specific and works for you. One significant barrier I had to contend with when developing the conceptual framework for use in my context were class sizes. While my educational beliefs may lend themselves to smaller class sizes, my reality did not match this. Consequently, the Planning Tool in particular is designed to be responsive to the challenges inherent in large cohort and class sizes. When you can identify where there are contradictions between your values and beliefs and the reality of your context, you will be able to consider how to be responsive to these in your own practice.

*Step Four: Imagine Your Own Version of the Framework*

Now that you have established your own beliefs and educational values and considered these in light of the conceptual framework components and your specific context, it is time to consider how the framework could work for you. You may want to consider some of the following questions during this step:

- Which components of the framework work for you and would you keep as they are presented in this book?
- Are there components you would remove or edit? Why?
- From your beliefs about education, GCE, and critical thinking, and the realities of your context, can you identify gaps in the framework? Are there pieces missing which are needed for your practice?
- Consider your contextual considerations specifically in relation to relevant external factors. Are there societal or student-specific considerations which would impact on your implementation of critical global learning and need to be reflected in your conceptual framework?
- From a practical perspective, consider how you would be able to implement the various aspects of the Planning Tool: do you teach in small or large numbers, do you have control over your physical learning environment, do you teach online, what strategies are you comfortable and familiar with, what new strategies would you like to learn to incorporate?

You may not have immediate answers to all of these questions, or indeed your answers may change over time. The framework can be updated and repeatedly adapted as needed. For the purposes of this step, I would encourage you not to strive for perfection, but for a starting point that will enable you to begin the process of implementing critical global learning in your context, and consequently learning about what works for you.

*Step Five: Implement, Test, Rework, Reflect*

My core recommendation for educators is to incorporate self-study research into your practice to enable you to track the impact of your efforts to incorporate critical global learning into your practice. As a form

of professional development, Samaras (2011) positions self-study as a life-long process. Significantly, self-study does not always have to take the form of a formal research study, but can describe your commitment as an educator to noticing and reflecting on your practice. The core tenet of self-study which will stick with me outside of formal research is the commitment to having an open mind and a willingness to find out things about my educational practice which will help me to improve it. The most significant outcome of this study has been a greater awareness of my practice and the factors that influence it. I developed my own reflective and criticality skills alongside my students and gained confidence in my ability to improve practice. I will continue to use these skills throughout my career in higher education. I will be able to build on the Model and the Planning Tool developed in this study as my knowledge and context change and evolve. While I hope that the findings from my study provide useful insight for others to apply to their practice, it is in testing them out and considering them in light of the challenges and opportunities within your individual contexts that they will have the most impact for you.

## CONCLUSION

This book shared the lessons from a self-study action research project undertaken within ITE in higher education in Ireland. In describing action research, Susman and Evered (1978, p. 586) posit that “the act itself is presented as the means of both changing the system and generating critical knowledge about it”. This was the case for this study. Engaging in action research enabled me to change my practice and approach to teaching critical global learning and, in doing so, contribute to the knowledge base in this area.

In an effort to share the lessons from my research, I want to reflect on what I know now as an educator that I did not prior to undertaking this study. Fundamentally, my practice as an educator has been irrevocably changed for the better. I cannot unlearn the reflection and criticality skills I developed through this process. I cannot ignore the insights and knowledge I have gained about critical global learning and its interaction with my context. In striving to navigate challenges and tensions which emerged in my practice, I learned to turn to and trust multiple sources of knowledge, including literature, my students, critical friends, colleagues, and my own knowledge and reflections.

Furthermore, as a result of this research study, we now have empirical evidence of an approach to teaching critical global learning that supports students in developing relevant skills. Additionally, this research study offers a new conceptualisation of critical global learning in the context of considerations for teaching in the form of the *Model for Teaching Critical Global Learning* and a structured approach to its implementation through the *Planning Tool for Implementing Critical Global Learning*. The findings from this study demonstrate the transformation in students' knowledge and skills that is possible and offers an approach to conceptualising how to approach the teaching of this area in an interactive, engaging and critical way.

To conclude, I would like to return to the words of the students who contributed so much to this study and whose insights, honesty, and generosity taught me so much. Although I experienced challenges and am aware that not all students experienced the same positive outcomes, many students experienced a significant change in mindset and skills. Just as I have been motivated by them to become a better educator, my students were often motivated to improve their skills due to a desire to also become better classroom teachers, as highlighted by the student who stated: "*I am doing my best to learn more so that I can pass on good information/habits/ decision making to children I teach*" (cycle one, group A, MSCS response). In sharing the most important approach which supported them to develop their critical global learning skills, another student stated that "*you need real life experience of critical thinking before you can just sit down and do it*" (cycle three, group D, focus group two participant) and in doing so reminds all of us as educators to ensure we provide these crucial opportunities for students through developing discussion cultures in our classrooms.

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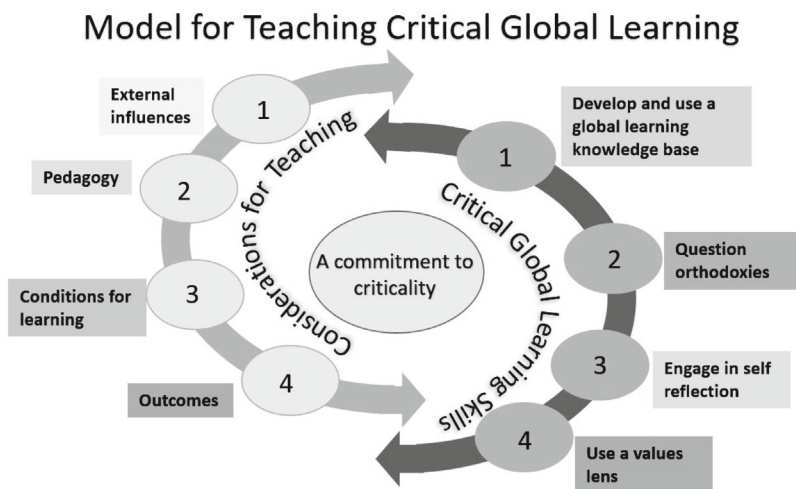
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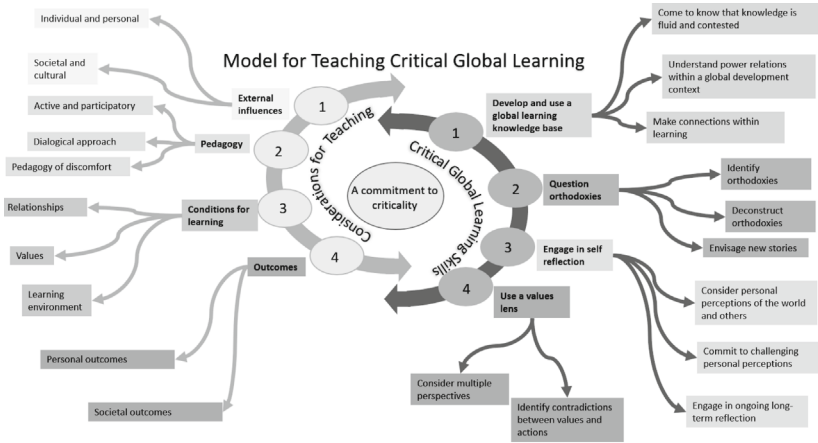
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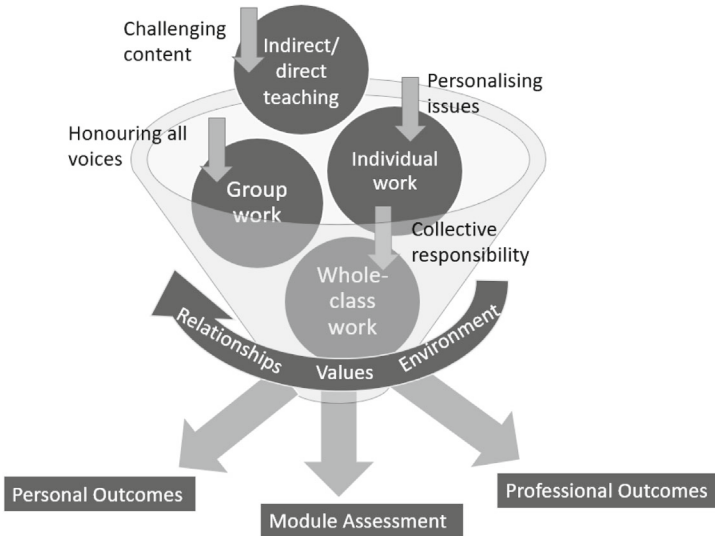


## APPENDIX: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK GRAPHICS FOR REFERENCE





## Planning Tool for Implementing Critical Global Learning



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