

The Challenges of Teaching for Engaged Citizenship

The Role of Cognitive-Structural Theories of Development

Goals of Higher Education

“The most basic goals of an undergraduate education remain the ability to think, write, and speak clearly; to reason critically; to solve problems; to work collaboratively; to acquire field-specific knowledge; and to acquire the judgment, analytic capacity, and independence of thought to support continued, self-driven, lifelong learning and engaged citizenship” (American Council on Education and others 2006).

Colby (2008, p. 7)

Skills of Civic Engagement

- Communication, writing and speaking
- Critical thinking, collective decision-making, including identifying public problems, deliberating, listening, working as a team, understanding others' perspectives, compromising, finding solutions
- Reflection, analyzing experience and consequences of action, creating explicit connections to civic obligations

Mehaffy (2008, p. 6)

Reflective Thinking

- “[Reflective] Thinking begins in what may fairly enough be called a *forked-road* situation, a situation which is ambiguous, which presents a dilemma, which proposes alternatives.”
- “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. . . . a conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of reasons.”
- “an act of searching or investigation directed toward bringing to light further facts which serve to corroborate or to nullify the suggested belief”

(John Dewey, *How We Think*)

Reflective Judgment Model

(King & Kitchener, 1994)

Pre-Reflective Thinking

Real problems for which there are no answers do not exist. Evidence is not used to reach conclusions.

Stage 1. Beliefs based on exact correspondence with reality.

Stage 2. Knowledge is certain, though it may not be available. Authorities know the truth. When uncertain, accept the view of an authority. Evidence not a criterion for establishing truthfulness.

Stage 3. Knowledge is temporarily uncertain in some areas and certain in others. Beliefs justified according to authority in areas of certainty and what feels right in areas of uncertainty. Evidence can neither be evaluated nor used to reason to conclusions.

Reflective Judgment Model

(King & Kitchener, 1994)

Quasi-Reflective Thinking

Some problems are ill-structured. Knowledge claims about these problems contain certain elements of uncertainty.

Stage 4. Knowledge is uncertain because of limitations of knower. Beliefs are justified by idiosyncratic uses of evidence and opinion. Differences in POV exist because of people's upbringing or because they deliberately distort information. Evidence is used in support of a point of view along with unsubstantiated opinion.

Stage 5. Interpretation is inherent in all understanding; therefore, no knowledge is certain. Beliefs may be justified only within a given context or from a given perspective. Evidence can be evaluated qualitatively; within a perspective, some evidences is stronger or more relevant than other evidence.

Reflective Judgment Model

(King & Kitchener, 1994)

Reflective Thinking
Knowledge claims are contextual and must be actively constructed.

Stage 6. Knowledge is uncertain and must be understood in relationship to context and evidence. Some points of view may be tentatively judged as better than others. Evidence on different points of view can be compared and evaluated as a basis for justification.

Stage 7. Knowledge is constructed by analyzing and synthesizing evidence and opinions into coherent explanations.

Link Between Civic Engagement & Reflective Judgment

- The ability to think reflectively would seem to be a pre-requisite for engaged citizenship.
- There is most likely a symbiotic relationship between activities designed to help students become more critical or reflective thinkers and activities designed to help students learn civic engagement skills.
- Students' cognitive-structural development provides insight into their performance of civic engagement activities, and that performance might be expected to change over time as students develop greater cognitive complexity.

English 101—Policy Unit

- Annotated Bibliography—Write a 10- to 12-sentence descriptive and evaluative annotation that positions, summarizes, responds to, and evaluates the usefulness of the text as a source for the exploratory and policy essays (10 to 12 sources)
- Exploratory Essay—Examine the different perspectives that an issue invites; summarize and analyze three perspectives (1,250 to 1,750 words)
- Policy Essay—Move an audience to action; write to a national legislative body, a state legislative body, or a policy-making organization that has some involvement with their issue (1,250 to 1,750 words)

Overview of Research Study

- Examined role of cognitive-structural development in students' performance in first-year composition course focused on reading and writing argument
- Research Questions
 - Task Demands and Student Readiness
 - Impact of Persuasive Writing on Cognitive-Structural Development
 - Role of Cognitive-Structural Development in the Writing Process

Overview of Research Study

- Participants
 - 136 students enrolled in English 101 in Spring 2008
 - **20 students enrolled in single section of the course**
- Method
 - Online assessment of reflective judgment (Reasoning About Current Issues)
 - Classroom observations
 - Student interviews (based on Reflective Judgment Interview Protocol)
 - **Document analysis (2 essays from 16 students enrolled in a single section)**

Student Readiness

	Pretest RCI Score	Posttest RCI Score	Change
Workforce	4.46	4.17	-.30
Alcoholism	4.96	4.55	-.41
Immigration	4.13	4.78	.65
Overall RCI	4.52	4.50	-.02

Task Demands— Exploratory Essay

- Write a conclusion that sums up what you've learned about the issue from researching and writing the paper—describe experience **(Stage 2)**
- Identify at least three different perspectives on the issue **(Stage 3)**
- Summarize three perspectives on the issue accurately **(Stage 3)**
- Move beyond notion that issue has only two sides **(Stage 4)**
- Identify things you still need to learn about the issue **(Stage 4)**
- Analyze three perspectives on the issue (i.e., what is the rhetorical situation surrounding each perspective?) **(Stage 5)**

Student Performance— Exploratory Essay

Competencies

- Identifying at least 3 different perspectives

Challenges

- Summing up what they learned
- Identifying what they still need to learn
- Summarizing and analyzing three different perspectives
- Moving beyond the notion that issue has only two sides

Student Performance— Exploratory Essay

In tabloid journalism there are the journalists and the celebrities, but they are not the only two parts to the spectrum. There is also the in-between. The pro-tabloids and the anti-tabloids have extremely different views, but the middle has some of the same views of both. In the middle of the spectrum would be where the people that read the tabloids listen to the gossip on the radio and go online to read the latest news. They read the tabloids but are not out trying to capture politicians and celebrities doing things they are not supposed to and even doing every day tasks. The middle is not out plotting against the journalists and paparazzi trying to bring them down because they themselves participate in the reading and enjoying of tabloid journalism. They have ties to both ends of the spectrum, which makes them partial to both the anti-tabloid and the pro-tabloid groups.—*Example of Pro/Con/Middle Construction*

Student Performance— Exploratory Essay

Competencies

- Identifying at least 3 different perspectives

Challenges

- Summing up what they learned
- Identifying what they still need to learn
- Summarizing and analyzing three different perspectives
- Moving beyond the notion that issue has only two sides

Task Demands— Policy Essay

- Summarize opposing arguments (**Stage 3**)
- Identify other possible solutions (**Stage 4**)
- Establish exigency for writing; establish need for change (**Stage 4**)
- Justify the solution (i.e., identify benefits of adopting proposal for readers) (**Stage 5**)
- Justify the solution (i.e., prove that proposal is an answer to opposing arguments) (**Stage 6**)
- Support proposal (data, ethical/emotional appeals, common sense) (**Stage 5**)
- Propose a solution to a problem with precisely defined terms (**Stage 6**)

Student Performance— Policy Essay

Competencies

- Establishing exigency for writing
- Justifying the solution (i.e., identifying benefits)

Challenges

- Summarizing opposing arguments
- Identifying other possible solutions
- Proposing a solution with precisely defined terms
- Supporting the proposal
- Justifying the solution (i.e., addressing opposing arguments)

Student Performance— Policy Essay

Others opposed to an increase in AIDS funding say that giving out condoms and promoting safe sex interferes with certain religious beliefs and may even be promoting abortion (Promoting Sex Work Projects). We cannot however let religious beliefs interfere with the progress that we have already made and are making in respect to AIDS treatment and prevention.—*Example of dismissing opposing viewpoints*

Student Performance— Policy Essay

Another argument made would be that this method would take away freedom of speech from the candidates. This is slightly true, but sacrifices must be made. Americans must ask themselves which is more important, the slight inhibition of freedom of speech for presidential candidates, or the corruption of the morals of the United States as a result of the growing issues at hand. —*Example of minimizing opposing viewpoints*

Student Performance— Policy Essay

Competencies

- Establishing exigency for writing
- Justifying the solution (i.e., identifying benefits)

Challenges

- Summarizing opposing arguments
- Identifying other possible solutions
- Proposing a solution with precisely defined terms
- Supporting the proposal
- Justifying the solution (i.e., addressing opposing arguments)

Implications & Recommendations

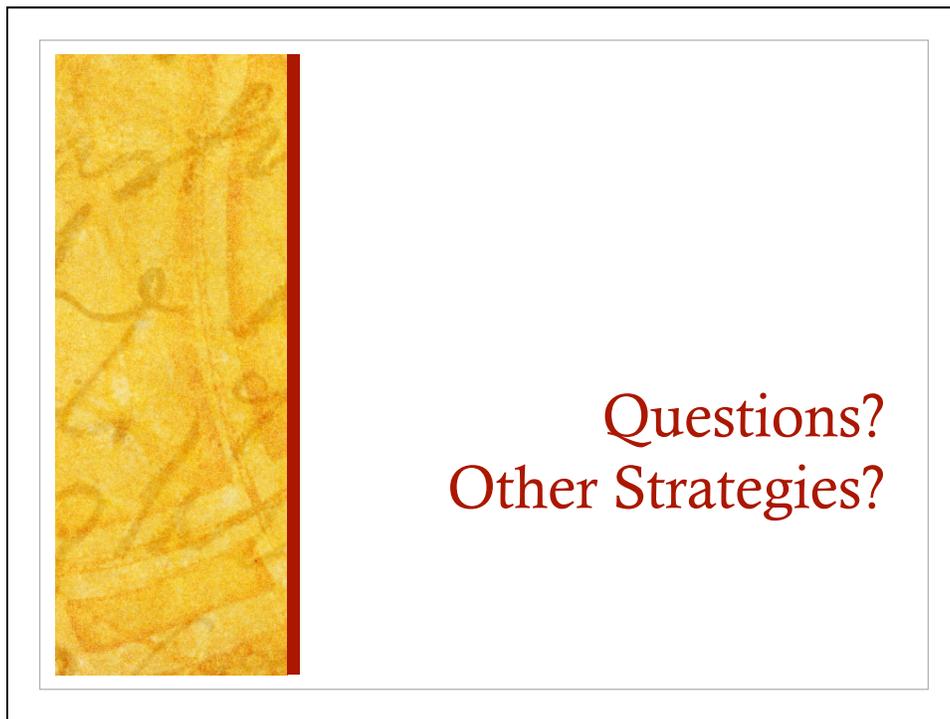
- Restructuring the Policy Unit
 - Explore a single issue as a class
 - Generate a list of action questions related to the issue as a class
 - Identify key stakeholders for the issue and divide class into groups representing these stakeholders
 - Working in small groups, have students develop a collective annotated bibliography on a single perspective
 - Students write a short essay describing a single stakeholder perspective

Implications & Recommendations

- Restructuring the Exploratory Essay Assignment
 - Assemble small groups with one representative from each stakeholder groups
 - Have students share with each other what they have learned about their stakeholder's perspective
 - Have students draft an essay exploring three different perspectives drawing on the sources in the group annotated bibliographies

Implications & Recommendations

- Restructuring the Policy Essay Assignment
 - Have students identify a published policy essay related to one of questions identified by the class and, using sources from the class annotated bibliographies, defend or oppose the policy outlined in the essay
 - In small groups, have students construct course of action in response to questions identified by class and develop PowerPoint presentation describing the need for the policy, the proposed policy, and possible outcomes related to adopting the policy



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King & Kitchener's Reflective Judgment Model (1994, pp. 250-251)	Essay 3: Exploratory Essay Examine the different perspectives an issue invites	Evaluation of Student Response			Essay 4: Policy Essay Move an audience to action	Evaluation of Student Response		
		Yes	No	Partial		Yes	No	Partial
<i>Stage 2.</i> Knowledge is certain, though it may not be available. Authorities know the truth. When uncertain, accept the view of an authority. Evidence not a criterion for establishing truthfulness.	<i>Write a conclusion that sums up what you've learned about the issue from researching and writing the paper— describe experience</i>	2	12	2				
<i>Stage 3.</i> Knowledge is temporarily uncertain in some areas and certain in others. Beliefs justified according to authority in areas of certainty and what feels right in areas of uncertainty. Evidence can neither be evaluated nor used to reason to conclusions. Opinions and beliefs cannot be distinguished from factual evidence.	<i>Identify at least three different perspectives on the issue</i>	10	4	2	<i>Summarize opposing arguments</i>	5	7	4
	<i>Summarize three perspectives on the issue accurately</i>	3	6	7				
<i>Stage 4.</i> Knowledge is uncertain because of limitations of knower. Beliefs are justified by idiosyncratic uses of evidence and opinion.	<i>Move beyond notion that issue has only two sides</i>	5	4	4	<i>Identify other possible solutions</i>	1	11	4

Continued⇒

Differences in POV exist because of people's upbringing or because they deliberately distort information. Evidence is used in support of a point of view along with unsubstantiated opinion.	<i>Identify things you still need to learn about the issue</i>		16		<i>Establish exigency for writing; establish need for change</i>	8	6	2
<p><i>Stage 5.</i> Interpretation is inherent in all understanding; therefore, no knowledge is certain. Beliefs may be justified only within a given context or from a given perspective. Evidence can be evaluated qualitatively; within a perspective, some evidence is stronger or more relevant than other evidence.</p>	<p><i>Analyze three perspectives on the issue (i.e., what is the rhetorical situation surrounding each perspective?)</i></p>	2	8	6	<p><i>Justify the solution</i> Identify benefits of adopting proposal for readers</p>	6	3	7
					<p><i>Support proposal</i> Solid data Moral arguments Common sense</p>	4	8	4
<p><i>Stage 6.</i> Knowledge is uncertain and must be understood in relationship to context and evidence. Some points of view may be tentatively judged as better than others. Evidence on different points of view can be compared and evaluated as a basis for justification.</p>					<p><i>Propose a solution to a problem with precisely defined terms</i></p>	2	6	8
					<p><i>Justify the solution</i> Prove that proposal is an answer to opposing arguments</p>		11	5

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