

FOSTERING CRITICAL THINKING IN LARGE CLASSES: AN INVESTIGATION INTO LITERACY PRACTICES ON UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

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ABSTRACT

The study observed five introductory courses for one semester at one public University in Ghana to find out academic literacy practices being engendered and how critical thinking is fostered through those practices. Five lecturers observed were interviewed. Forty students from classes observed participated in group interviews. Interviews were replicated with five lecturers and sixteen students in two other public universities. Data was triangulated to identify emergent patterns of lecturers' and students' experiences with teaching and learning. Findings raise questions around the levels of congruence between lecturers' personal epistemology and practice. Consensus about the importance of critical thinking in lecturers' aims for student learning was not translated into literacy practices. There is a disconnection between the goals for learning and the teaching, learning and assessment system. Practices described by both lecturers and students are completely in tension with university policies. Lecturers need to learn new skills to cope with large classes.

KEYWORDS: Critical Thinking, Academic Literacy Practices, Large Classes