

## **Utilizing Critical Writing Exercises to Foster Critical Thinking in Diverse First-Year Undergraduate Students and Prepare Them for Life Outside University**

**Sandra Abegglen, Tom Burns, and Sandra Sinfield**

London Metropolitan University

This report builds on selected notions of critical pedagogy to explore the use of critical writing exercises to promote critical thinking skills in undergraduate students. The report explores the value of these exercises in the context of a first-year core module of the Bachelor of Arts with Honors Education Studies at London Metropolitan University (United Kingdom). The population of students in this program tends to be internationally diverse and minority, and comes from working class communities. The student diversity is perhaps especially important to cultivate in learning education studies, which itself involves knowing how education “works in different countries and cultures.” But teaching, according to Freire, is often an exercise in colonial oppression—that is, it tends to erase student diversity in the process of remediating perceived “deficits.” And this erasure of student diversity thereby inhibits their ability to excel in education studies. This would seem to locate Freire’s site of colonization in the Honors classroom, which a Freirean approach attempts to undo through critical writing exercises. The aim of this paper is not only to critically reflect on the means and methods used to foster students’ criticality, but also to bridge the gap between students’ and teachers’ understanding of a well-known study criterion—that of “being critical”—to prepare them for a globalized, professional world where criticality is seen as a key element for a successful career. We argue that the skills acquired in the module, and through its critical writing exercises, are transferable beyond academia and into the professional arena that our students will inhabit.

DOI: [10.37514/DBH-J.2016.4.1.06](https://doi.org/10.37514/DBH-J.2016.4.1.06)