



THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL THINKING IN MODERN EDUCATION

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Received: 7 th April 2024 Accepted: 11 th May 2024	<i>The current article aims at providing general information about critical thinking and its importance in modern education. The article also seeks to highlight the reasons why critical thinking is essential in modern education and suggests different strategies proven by experts and discusses benefits of critical thinking.</i>
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INTRODUCTION: Education is one of the most critical aspects of human development, and it plays a vital role in shaping an individual's perspective of the world. Thus, to ensure that students across the globe get a quality and inclusive education, modern educators must integrate critical thinking into the curriculum.

Critical thinking is a set of cognitive abilities that enables students to analyze, evaluate, and interpret information, which is an indispensable skill in the modern era. In recent times, the importance of critical thinking in modern education has been widely recognized.

IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL THINKING IN MODERN EDUCATION

Critical thinking is essential in the modern education system because it helps students develop an ability to question assumptions and challenge dogma. It is through critical thinking that students learn to analyze multiple perspectives and formulate their own opinions based on facts and evidence.

Critical thinking is also vital in preparing students for the workforce as they will need to deal with complex issues, make informed decisions, and think critically when analyzing data. With technology advancing at an unprecedented rate, there is an increasing demand for individuals with a high level of critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, universities and employers are increasingly seeking individuals who possess critical thinking skills.

Critical thinking is a process that begins with acquiring relevant information, analyzing that information objectively, and drawing logical conclusions. Students who develop critical thinking skills are equipped to solve problems independently and creatively, which is a crucial life skill.

In traditional education, students are told what to think, replicate information and regurgitate it on exams. However, in modern education, students learn the importance of asking thoughtful questions, challenging

ideas, and seeking answers based on accurate information, which are critical aspects of critical thinking.

In other words, critical thinking is fundamental to ensuring democratic participation as it enhances student's ability to evaluate political candidates and issues objectively. It also enables individuals to make informed decisions on different subjects such as politics, economics and advocacy issues.

WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

Critical thinking is about teaching students HOW to think; it is not about teaching them WHAT to think. It is teaching students more than memorize and repeat. It is teaching students more than remember and retell. It is teaching students to ask "Why" Why did that happen? Who did that? What did he do? Why did he do that? Where did that begin? When will it end?

Teaching learners about Critical Thinking is teaching them to look deeper into what they see and what they hear, and teaching them to form their own opinions, and teaching them to develop new ideas.

Six level ability in thinking or processing information (Bloom's taxonomy) and key verbs for each level:

Lower order/ easier skill:

1. Knowledge – Can students remember information? (easiest)

- list, memorize, name, order, recognize, remember, repeat, reproduce;

2. Comprehension – Can students understand the new information?

- classify, describe, explain, identify, retell, review, select, translate;

Higher order/ more difficult skills:

3. Application – Can students use the information in another situation?

- choose, demonstrate, dramatize, problem solve, interpret, use;



4. Analysis – Can students analyze information? (to analyze -to take something apart and study the separate parts)

-analyze, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, examine, experiment, question, test;

5. Synthesis – Can students use the information to create something new? (to synthesize = to put separate parts together to create a complete whole)

- assemble, compose, construct, create, design, develop, manage, propose;

6. Evaluation – Can students evaluate the information? (hardest)

- argue, judge, rate, value, conclude, prove;

(to argue = to give reasons for or against something in a clear and organized way. A different meaning of to argue is to disagree or fight with words.) [1]

If educators teach their students according to above given Bloom's taxonomy students will really become professionals that can solve any problem using their critical thinking when they face problematic situations at work.

WHY TO TEACH CRITICAL THINKING?

Teaching traditionally includes the first two levels of easier skills, knowledge and comprehension. But it is important for teachers to include activities and questions that require learners to use higher and more difficult levels of thinking such as application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. An education system that teaches only memorization of information, but doesn't teach students to ask "Why?" will produce adults who may believe that everything they hear or read is true and factual. So, we teachers should try to produce specialists who can use their critical thinking and solve any problems that they will face in their professional and personal life.

Even the youngest students can use Critical Thinking with activities that lead them step-by-step to solve problems. For example, "We have three students but only two chairs. What shall we do?" Problem solving skills learned by school children are later used in their adult years. For example, "We have twenty-two schools in our town, but only sixteen qualified English teachers. What shall we do?" Problem-solving activities help students learn to use information in many different ways- not just remember it.

In addition, Critical Thinking skills are often called Creative Thinking skills. Teachers need to encourage student's natural curiosity and open their minds to new ideas. These Critical and Creative thinking skills learned during school years are carried into adulthood and from adulthood into their real life.

Who are critical thinkers, and what characteristics do they have in common? Critical thinkers are

usually curious and reflective people. Students with critical thinking like to explore and probe new areas and seek knowledge, clarification, and new solutions. They ask pertinent questions, evaluate statements and arguments, and they distinguish between facts and opinion. They are also willing to examine their own beliefs, possessing a manner of humility that allows them to admit lack of knowledge or understanding when needed. They are open to changing their mind. Perhaps most of all, they actively enjoy learning, and seeking new knowledge is a lifelong pursuit. While using critical thinking strategies during classes students learn to argue, judge, rate, value, and how to conclude and prove new solutions. [2]

CRITICAL THINKING is clear, reasonable, reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do. It means asking probing questions like, "How do we know?" or "Is this true in every case or just in this instance?" It involves being skeptical and challenging assumptions, rather than simply memorizing facts or blindly accepting what you hear or read.

Imagine, for example, that you're reading a history textbook. You wonder who wrote it and why, because you detect certain assumptions in the writing. You find that the author has a limited scope of research focused only on a particular group within a population. In this case, your critical thinking reveals that there are "other sides to the story. This may well be you!

No matter where you are on the road to being a critical thinker, you can always more fully develop your skills. Doing so will help you develop more balanced arguments, express yourself clearly, read critically, and absorb important information efficiently. Critical thinking skills will help you in any profession or any circumstance of life, from science to art to business to teaching.

Critical thinking skills are perhaps the most fundamental skills involved in making judgments and solving problems. You use them every day, and you can continue improving them.

The ability to think critically about a matter—to analyze a question, situation, or problem down to its most basic parts—is what helps us evaluate the accuracy and truthfulness of statements, claims, and information we read and hear. It is the sharp knife that, when honed, separates fact from fiction, honesty from lies, and the accurate from the misleading. We all use this skill to one degree or another almost every day. For example, we use critical thinking every day as we consider the latest consumer products and why one particular product is the best among its peers. Is it a quality product because a celebrity endorses it? Because a lot of other people may have used it? Because it is made by one company



versus another? Or perhaps because it is made in one country or another? These are questions representative of critical thinking.

The academic setting demands more of us in terms of critical thinking than everyday life. It demands that we evaluate information and analyze myriad issues. It is the environment where our critical thinking skills can be the difference between success and failure. In this environment we must consider information in an analytical, critical manner. We must ask questions—What is the source of this information? Is this source an expert one and what makes it so? Are there multiple perspectives to consider on an issue? Do multiple sources agree or disagree on an issue? Does quality research substantiate information or opinion? Do I have any personal biases that may affect my consideration of this information?

It is only through purposeful, frequent, intentional questioning such as this that we can sharpen our critical thinking skills and improve as students, learners and researchers. [3]

According to Dr. Andrew Robert Baker, thinking comes naturally. You don't have to make it happen—it just does. But you can make it happen in different ways. For example, you can think positively or negatively. You can think with "heart" and you can think with rational judgment. You can also think strategically and analytically, and mathematically and scientifically. These are a few of multiple ways in which the mind can process thought.

What are some forms of thinking you use? When do you use them, and why?

As a student, you are tasked with engaging and expanding your thinking skills. One of the most important of these skills is critical thinking. Critical thinking is important because it relates to nearly all tasks, situations, topics, careers, environments, challenges, and opportunities. It's not restricted to a particular subject area. [4]

According to Dr. Wilson, a growing body of research over the past several decades indicates that teaching students how to be better thinkers is a great way to support them to be more successful at school and beyond. In the book, *Teaching Students to Drive Their Brains*, Dr. Wilson shares research and many motivational strategies, activities, and lesson ideas that assist students to think at higher levels. Five key strategies from the book are as follows:

- Facilitate conversation about why it is important to think critically at school and in other contexts of life. Ideally, every student will have a contribution to make to the discussion over time.

- Begin teaching thinking skills early in the school year and as a daily part of class.
- As this instruction begins, introduce students to the concept of brain plasticity and how their brilliant brains change during thinking and learning. This can be highly motivational for students who do not yet believe they are good thinkers!
- Explicitly teach students how to use the thinking skills.
- Facilitate student understanding of how the thinking skills they are learning relate to their lives at school and in other contexts. [5]

As we discussed above, critical thinking is the ability to analyze information objectively, consider different perspectives, and make sound judgments. It involves asking questions, evaluating evidence, and drawing logical conclusions. Here are some examples of using critical thinking strategies in the classroom:

• **Socratic Questioning:** It encourages students to engage in thoughtful discussions by employing Socratic questioning. Ask open-ended questions that prompt deeper exploration of concepts, helping students develop analytical and reasoning skills.

• **Real-World Problem-Solving:** Integrate real-world problems into the curriculum, allowing students to apply critical thinking skills to authentic situations. This hands-on approach fosters practical problem-solving abilities and encourages creativity.

• **Debates and Discussions:** Organize debates and class discussions to expose students to diverse perspectives. This not only enhances their critical thinking but also teaches them how to construct persuasive arguments and consider alternative viewpoints.

• **Case Studies:** Utilize case studies from various fields to present complex scenarios. This challenges students to analyze information, identify key issues, and propose effective solutions, fostering critical thinking within specific contexts.

• **Questioning Techniques:** Ask excellent, provocative questions that move beyond those with concrete answers to a place where students must examine why they think the way they do. Consistently insist that students provide evidence to support their conclusions when expressing opinions in the classroom. By incorporating these critical thinking strategies, teachers can help students develop the skills to analyze information, consider different perspectives, and make sound judgments. This will leave them better able to think clearly and systematically, and better able to express themselves coherently. [6]



What are some key benefits of using critical thinking strategies in the classroom? Here are some key benefits of using critical thinking strategies in the classroom:

Deeper Understanding and Engagement: Critical thinking helps students move beyond surface-level comprehension to a deeper understanding of concepts. By asking probing questions and analyzing information from multiple perspectives, students engage more actively with the material.

Improved Problem-Solving Skills: Applying critical thinking to real-world problems fosters the development of practical problem-solving abilities. Students learn to break down complex issues, evaluate evidence, and propose effective solutions.

Enhanced Reasoning and Analytical Skills: Critical thinking exercises strengthen students' reasoning and analytical skills. By learning to construct logical arguments, detect fallacies, and evaluate the validity of claims, students become more discerning consumers and producers of information.

Increased Creativity and Innovation: Encouraging critical thinking in the classroom promotes creativity and innovation. When students are encouraged to think outside the box, consider alternative viewpoints, and challenge assumptions, they are more likely to generate novel ideas and solutions.

Better Communication and Collaboration: Critical thinking skills are essential for effective communication and collaboration. By learning to express their ideas clearly, consider different perspectives, and engage in respectful dialogue, students develop the interpersonal skills necessary for success in academic and professional settings.

Lifelong Learning and Adaptability: Ultimately, critical thinking equips students with the tools they need to be lifelong learners and adaptable problem-solvers. By fostering the ability to think critically, educators empower students to navigate an ever-changing world and continue learning and growing throughout their lives.

By incorporating critical thinking strategies into their teaching practices, educators can help students develop the skills and mindsets necessary for success in the 21st century. From deeper engagement to enhanced creativity and adaptability, the benefits of critical thinking in the classroom are numerous and far-reaching. Critical thinking skills can greatly benefit students in their future careers in several ways:

Improved Problem-Solving Abilities: Critical thinking equips students with the skills to break down complex problems, analyze information objectively, and develop creative solutions. This ability to think critically

is highly valued in numerous career paths, from science and engineering to business and law.

Enhanced Decision-Making: By evaluating information from multiple perspectives and considering the potential consequences of their actions, critical thinkers are able to make well-informed decisions. This decision-making ability is crucial for success in any professional field, as it allows individuals to navigate challenges and seize opportunities effectively.

Adaptability and Flexibility: In today's rapidly changing job market, the ability to adapt to new situations and think flexibly is paramount. Critical thinkers are better equipped to handle unexpected challenges, as they can quickly assess the context, draw upon their knowledge and skills, and devise appropriate responses.

Effective Communication and Collaboration: Critical thinking involves the ability to clearly articulate one's thoughts, understand different viewpoints, and engage in respectful dialogue. These communication and collaboration skills are essential for success in team-based work environments, which are common across various industries.

Continuous Learning and Growth: Critical thinking fosters a growth mindset, as it encourages individuals to continuously question, learn, and improve. This mindset is invaluable in today's job market, where the ability to adapt to new technologies, acquire new skills, and stay current with industry trends is crucial for long-term career success. [7]

By developing critical thinking skills in the classroom, students can gain a significant advantage in their future careers. These skills enable them to approach problems systematically, make sound decisions, communicate effectively, and adapt to changing circumstances. Ultimately, critical thinking is a powerful tool that can help students unlock their full potential and thrive in their chosen professions.

In conclusion, it is important to mention that the importance of critical thinking skills in modern education cannot be overstated. By integrating critical thinking into the curriculum, educators can assist students with developing vital skills, such as independent analysis and problem-solving. Additionally, critical thinking prepares students for the demands of the modern workforce and reinforces democratic participation. Without the necessary critical thinking skills, individuals will have a limited perspective of the world, which can hinder their success in both their academic and professional lives.

By using critical thinking strategies, educators can create a more engaging and interactive learning environment that encourages students to think critically, analyze information, and develop well-



supported arguments. This approach not only enhances students' academic performance but also prepares them for the challenges they will face in their personal and professional lives.

Moreover, critical thinking helps students develop essential skills such as creativity, innovation, and adaptability, which are crucial for success in an ever-changing world. By fostering these skills, educators can empower students to navigate complex problems, think outside the box, and develop novel solutions.

To sum up, using critical thinking in the classroom is essential for creating a well-rounded and effective learning environment. By incorporating critical thinking strategies into their teaching practices, educators can help students develop the skills and mindsets necessary for success in the 21st century.

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