

**SULAYMAN DARBOE**

CRITICAL THINKING

**ATLANTIC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

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**Introduction**

Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking. Someone with critical thinking skills is able to do the so many things such as understanding the logical connections between ideas. It also identify, construct and evaluate arguments. It also enable someone to have the ability to solve problems systematically. To also know and have the ability to identify the relevance and importance of ideas. Critical thinking is not simply a matter of accumulating information. A person with a good memory and who knows a lot of facts is not really good at critical thinking. Critical thinkers are able to deduce consequences from what they know and make the best use of the information to solve problem and to seek relevant sources of information to inform themselves.

Critical thinking should not be confused with being argumentative or being critical of other people. Although critical thinking skills can be used in exposing fallacies and poor reasoning. Critical thinking can also play an important role in cooperative reasoning and constructive task. Critical thinking can aid us acquire knowledge, improve our theories and strengthen arguments. We can also use critical thinking to enhance work process and improve social institution. Some people believe that critical thinking hinders creativity because critical thinking required some rules like rules of logic and rationality, whereas creativity required breaking these rules. Critical thinking is quite compatible with thinking approaches. If anything critical thinking is an important part of creativity because we need to critically think to evaluate and improve our creative ideas.

**Importance of critical thinking**

1. **Critical thinking is a domain-general thinking skill.**

The ability to think clearly and rationally is important in what ever we choose to do. If you work in an educational system like the finance department, the management department or the legal profession, then critical thinking is obviously important as you will critically think every day to do something. But critical thinking skills are not restricted to a particular subjects area. Being able to think well and solve problems systematically is an asset for any career.

1. **Critical thinking is very important in the new knowledge economy.**

The global knowledge economy is driven by information and technology. One has to be able to be able to deal with the changes quickly and effectively. The



new economy places increasing demands on flexible intellectual skills and the ability to analyse information and integrate diverse sources of knowledge in solving problems. Good critical thinking skills promote such thinking skills and is very important in the fast changing of economy department or any other workplace.

1. **Critical thinking enhances language .presentation skills.**

Thinking clearly and systematically can improve the way we express ideas. I will help in learning how to analyse the logical structure of texts. Critical thinking also improves comprehensive abilities.

1. **Critical thinking promote creativity**

For one to come up with a creative solution to a problem doesn’t involves only new ideas. It must also be the case that the new ideas being generated are useful and relevant to the task at hand. Critical thinking plays an crucial role in evaluating new ideas, selecting the best ones and modifying them if necessary.

**5 Critical thinking is crucial for self-reflection.**

In order to live a meaningful life and to structure our lives accordingly. We need to justify and reflect on our values and decisions. Critical thinking provides the tools for this process of self-evaluation

**6.Good critical thinking is the foundation of science and democracy**

in the areas of science and democracy its important to have good critical thinkers to make the system work effectively. This is so because science requires the critical use of reasoning in experimentation and theoretical confirmation. For a proper functioning of a liberal democracy it required citizens who can think critically about the social issues to inform their judgements about the proper governance of a state. Without the critical thinker it going to be hard for a good governance to run as no one will be there to criticize and inform the citizens on how good governance should be or to critically analyse the government operations.

1. **Critical thinking is a meta-cognitive skill.**

Meta-cognitive means the higher-level cognitive skill that involve thinking about thinking. We have to be aware of the good principles of reasoning and be reflective about our own reasoning. In addition, we often need to make a concious and wise efforts to improve ourselves and avoid biases and maintain



objectivity. In live we are all able to think but to think well often requires a long period of training.

**Ways to improve our thinking skills**

To critically think we need to learn the procedures on how to critically think. The mastery of critical thinking is similar to the mastery of many other skills. There are three main components of critical thinking which include: the theory, the practical and the attitude.

**The theory of critical thinking**

If we want to think correctly, we need to follow the correct rules of critical thinking and the reasoning of knowledge of theory which includes of these rules. These are the principles of critical thinking such as the laws of logic and the methods of scientific reasoning and so on. It will also be useful to know something about not to do if we want to reason correctly. This simply means we should have basic knowledge of the mistakes that people make. This requires some knowledge of typical fallacies and psychologist have discovered persistent biases and limitations in human reasoning an awareness of these empirical findings well alert us to potential problems.

**The practical of critical thinking**

In life the knowledge acquired in merely knowing the principles that distinguish what is good and bad reasoning is not enough. We might learn in the classroom about how to cook and learn about the basic theories in cooking such as how to cut,mixed and the measurement to use yet we wont be able to cook correctly unless we can apply such theoretical knowledge through constant practice, we might not actually be able to cook.

Similarly, to be good critical thinking skills it is important to know the theoretical principles so that we can actually apply them in daily life, there are two ways of doing this. One is to perform lots of quality exercise. These exercises don’t just include interacting in the classroom or receiving tutorials, but they include engaging in discussions and debates with others people in our daily lives. Where the principles of critical thinking can be applied. The second methods is to think more deeply about the principles that we have acquired. In the human mind, memory and understanding are acquired through making connections between ideas.



**The attitude of critical thinking**

Good critical thinking skills required more than just knowledge and practice. Persistent practice can bring about improvements only if one has the right kind of motivation and attitude. The following attitude are not uncommon, but they are obstacles to critical thinking.

* I prefer being given the correct answer rather than figuring them out myself.
* I don’t like to think a lot about my decision as I rely only on gut feelings.
* I don’t usually review the mistakes I have made.
* I don’t like to be criticized.

In other to improve on our thinking we have to recognize the importance of reflecting on the reasons for belief and action. We should also be willing to engage in debates, we also need to break the old habits and deal with linguistic complexities and abstract concepts.

Some psychologist has made some test that is used to measure whether people are disposed to think critically. It measures the seven different thinking habits listed below and it is useful to ask ourselves to what extent they describe the way we think:

* Truth-seeking- do we try to understand how things really are? Are we interested in finding out the truth?
* Open-mindedness- how receptive are we to new ideas, even when we do not intuitively agree with them? Do we give new concepts a fair hearing?
* Analyticity- do we try to understand the reasons behind things? Do we act impulsively or do we evaluate the pros and cons of our decisions?
* Systematic- are we systematic in our thinking? Do we break down a complex problem into parts?
* Confidence in reasoning- do we always defer to other people? How confident are we in our own judgement? Do we reasons for our confidence? Do we have a way to evaluate our own thinking.
* Inquisitiveness- are we curious about unfamiliar topics and resolving complicated problems? Will we chase down an answer until you find it?
* Maturity of judgement- do you jump to conclusions? Do you try to see things from different perspectives? Do you take other peoples experiences into account?

Lastly, as mentioned before psychologists have discovered over the years that human reasoning can be easily affected by a variety of cognitive biases. For example, people tend to be over-confident of their abilities and focus too much on evidence that support their pre-existing opinions. We should be alert to these biases in our attitude towards our own thinking.



**The two features of critical thinking**

1. **How? Not what?**

Critical thinking is concerned not with what you believe rather how or why you believe it. Most classes such as those on biology or chemistry, teach you what to believe about a subject matter. In contrast, critical thinking will teach you how to form beliefs and how to think. It is interested in the type of reasoning you use when you form your beliefs. It also concern with whether you have good reasons to believe what you have beliefs. Therefore, this class isn’t a class on the psychology of reasoning.

1. **Ought not is ( or normative not descriptive)**

There is difference between normative and descriptive theories. Descriptive theories, such as those provided by physics, provide the picture of how the world factually behaves and operates. In contrast, normative theories, such as those provided by ethics or political philosophy, provide a picture of how the world should be rather than asking question such as why something happen, normative theories ask how something should be.

**Thinking in education**

In educational system, its perhaps the most important basic need for people, is the process that provides the development o human. The aim of education is to nurture the individual, to help to realize the full potential that already exists inside him or her. There has always been a strand of educational thought that held that the strengthening of the child thinking should be the main business of the school and not just an incidental outcome if it happen at all. Qualified education should show the way for students about what and how to learn. While students evaluate what they learned and their learning methods they manifest their critical thinking abilities.

If students are to function successfully in a highly technical society, then they must be well equipped with lifelong learning and thinking skills necessary to acquire and process information in an ever changing world. One of the aims of education should be developing students thinking skills as well as motor skills, which is basic goal of contemporary approaches in education. Students are not passive but active while they are realizing critical thinking.

**Critical thinking and education**



The most significant aims of education is to produce learners who are well informed, that is, learners should understand ideas that are important, useful and powerful. Another is to create learners who have the appetite to think analytically and critically to use what they know to enhance their own lives and also to contribute to their society.

In the educational system as education to be as a vehicles to promote critical thinking are based on certain assumption such as

1. The brains are biological but minds are created. Curriculum is thus a mind-altering device. This raises the moral requirement to treat learners as independent centres of consciousness with the fundamental ability to determine the contours of their own minds and lives.
2. The educational system should seek to prepare learners for self-direction not pre-conceived roles. It is therefore important that the learners be prepared for thinking their way through the maze of challenges that life will present independently.
3. The educational system should also teach the learners to carefully analysis, clear thinking and which the reasoned deliberation are fundamental to democracy and democratic life.

**Teaching critical thinking**

Every person should have an effective skill of critical thinking and they must not accept anything for granted but how can you teach to learners?

There are many ways of organizing for instruction in critical thinking. We can teach a separate course, we can infuse critical thinking into all that which we teach or we can use a mixed approach. The first approach of a separate course require materials that teach only critical thinking skills and knowledge. The downside is that there may be some little transfer from what what the course materials teach to the rest of the curriculum. Infusion is the second possible approach. It require that critical thinking be taught as an integral part of all subject area

**Critical thinking in today’s information society**

In our social era which is characterized by a large amount of information, which is easily accessible and with which people see themselves confronted by it everyday and every moment. Its is important to know how to apprehend the information that is essential and submit it to an appropriate treatment, whether it is to accept it as reliable and worthy of being processed or whether it is to classify it as fallacious and disposable. In this content and given everlasting and swift social transformations, critical thinking stands out as a fundamental cognitive resources. It even constitute itself as the decisive element to



successfully accomplish , success or to be successful when performing the multiplicity of tasks and situations we tackle on our daily basis.

Critical thinking is perceived as a cognitive capacity that allows one to covey meaning to disperse ideas, capacitating people to meaningful dialogue with others and to experience satisfying feelings both in their personal and social lives. This mechanism permits a better adjustment to the surrounding environment becoming of the greater use in school and work places, for both cases there is a required capacity to give quick and efficient response to the more varied challenges. As a matter of fact, research in this area associate higher degree of critical thinking to superior levels of control and pro activity in school education and daily life experience.

**Developing critical thinking**

The true mission of education is commonly described as being the promotion of thinking skills, critical thinking skills to be more precise. This issue is particularly significant in higher education, considering that it is by means of a university education that students get equipped to enter the labour market. Acquiring and perfecting resources with which they can face future challenges. This process occur by using what they have learned along their university education years and from the knowledge they have acquired and that is demanded in their line of work.

Despite the important conveyed by the education system about developing critical thinking skills, effective efforts to put such skills into practice and to promote their training hasn’t been noticeable so far. More complex thinking skills aren't covered by conversational teaching and assessment formats which are still too focused on data transmission, memorization of factual information and subsequent evocation of knowledge in evaluation situation. To a certain extent, this may be produced by some unawareness usually revealed by teachers about what critical thinking is in fact and how it can be integrated in their teaching and evaluating methods. In a conventional approach in which teaching and learning processes are centred on analytical skills and critical thinking is omitted, should be corrected for it doesn’t provide true opportunities for the students cognitive development.

**How to improve your critical thinking skills**

While you might already have many of the skills of critical thinking it may still be helpful to consider others areas for improvement especially for specific skills. You can always improve your critical thinking skills through practice and



extended educational opportunities. In considering to further improve your critical thinking skills, consider taking some of the following steps

1. Expand your industry specific or technical skills to help you more to easily identify problems.
2. Take more additional courses in your industry that required critical thinking and analysis.
3. Actively volunteer to solved problem for your current employer
4. Seek advice from professionals in your field or desired industry
5. Always asked a friend and colleague, manager or teacher to assess your current skills set can also help provide you with an objective view of your strengths. You may fine it beneficial or even necessary to practice your critical thinking skills to help build your own resume.

**Conclusion**

From the above discussion, it could be noted that critical thinking is no doubt necessary and important in every field of life most especially for professions that occupy with people. With the look of the health part, especially the people who directly intervene to the person life like the psychologies, counsellors and educationalists have to be critical thinkers in both practice and management. In order for teachers and counsellors to be able to implement critical thinking into their classroom they must first be committed to critical thinking and its philosophy.



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