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COURSE NAME:
CRITICAL THINKING

Assignment Title:
CRITICAL THINKING ASSIGNMENT

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Every normal human being thinks. Thinking is inherent to human nature. But most of the time our thinking, if left to itself, is likely to be biased, distorted, selfish, suffer the lack of useful information, or from prejudices. Critical Thinking skills cultivation is needed as we seek to improve the quality of our thoughts. Only quality thoughts of critical thinkers, can avoid the cost of careless thinking in terms of time, and money, and improve the quality of life in general. Paul and Elder (2001) defined Critical Thinking as “ the way of thinking - about a subject, a content, or a problem - in which the person improves the quality of his / her thinking by skillfully taking control of the basic features in thinking and strictly applying intellectual standards upon them”(Paul - Elder, 2010).

This assignment discusses Critical Thinking definition, purpose, and some of the key exponents. It will discuss the psychological thoughts and their application. It will also identify the place of Critical Thinking in Education. It will also identify and, compare the six hats of Critical Thinking. It will discuss how to become a better listener, a better questioner, and a better critical thinker. Then it will consider two special Critical Thinking aspects ie: Immature behavior and metacognition. Finally, it will conclude with a general review of what is learned in this course.

Paul R. et Al. (1997) mentioned that Critical Thinking is an old and rich concept that has been developing since the last 2500 years ago. Besides, they stated that Critical Thinking stands for awakening the intellect to the study of itself. According to these writers, Critical things can take different and various other definitions depending on their variant domains of application (R. Paul & Elder, 1997). Etymologically, the word "critical" has Greek roots: "Kriticos (discerning judgment) and the word "criterion" (which means: standards). Then, based on this etymological definition, the word 'critical' hints at the development of "discerning judgment based on standards." (R. Paul & Elder, 1997).

Many other ancient and famous writers and philosophers are remembered as strong exponents of the Idea of Critical Thinking. These are Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Thomas of Aquino to name but a few. Socrates, with his famous theory known as "Socratic Questioning". Socrates was against the fact that people claim to know or believe in something with confidence. But when you ask deep questions, most of the time, you discover that people's knowledge and beliefs are based on either: inaccurate or confused meaning, inadequate or false evidence, or self-contradicting beliefs. According to him, people even the powerful ones in high positions, though they sound knowledgeable and insightful, are subject to deep confusion and irrational thinking. He stated that life has no meaning if we cannot question ourselves in the way we think, what we say, and the way we act (R. Paul & Elder, 1997).

Critical Thinking is not theoretical but a practical skill. We constantly have thoughts in our minds, make decisions and choices and act according to the way we think about things. Dr. Winston Sieck, a cognitive psychologist (2021) mentioned that every person or society that values decision making, its implications, and consequences, needs strong Critical Thinking

skills. we live in a world with a large spectrum of information, a mixture of false and true stories, transmitted mouth to mouth among friends' coworkers, and neighbors. Social and classic media are breeding real and fake news. Big topics for instance religion, climate change, etc... are being discussed all around, by experts and novices. For practical purposes, there is a need to apply some Critical Thinking skills to adopt thinking and decision making leading to a better outcome.

Our families and friends have a way of thinking, beliefs, the don'ts and do, and shared points of view about various topics. One should remember that all of the people mentioned above influence how we think, what we believe in, and how we act. However, much they are important in our lives, they don't know everything about each topic and they are not right all the time. There is a need to adopt another way of thinking, challenging social and cultural paradigms, and boundaries. This can only be done by a thorough examination of every piece of information including the one which is beyond our comfort zone in the way we think and act.

Specifically, to discern and choose the best web to consult, and be able to identify fake and real news, Dr. Winston proposes the following practical questions to consider:

- Who is the author?
 - Do you know who the author is?
 - Is the author in a good or right position to provide accurate information, as far as knowledge is considered?
 - What does motivate the author?
- How reliable is the information?
 - What available scientific evidence supports the information?

- Is the given information consistent with other reputable sources?
- What is the quality/clarity with which the information is provided?
 - Is the information clear enough to make you understand how the process works?
 - How does the explanation fit with the knowledge you already have about the topic? (Sieck, 2021).

Furthermore, Critical Thinking is crucial to teaching psychology. According to Jane S.Halonen (2012), students often interpret behavior and characters based on their judgment. This judgment is most likely to be wrong or irrelevant as it is biased by their ignored inexperience. Psychology, being a science, students need to be taught scientific procedures, effective control measures, and legitimate forms of evidence. Therefore, this attitude would reduce the risk of them, declaring a multitude of baseless claims about behavior that confront human beings (Halonen, 2012).

The same author suggests to her colleagues and collaborators systematically and purposely develop the Critical Thinking skills, from the course introduction through the concluding experience. He highlighted the need to teach Critical Thinking skills in three psychological dimensions: the practical dimension (the “jerk avoidance” function), the theoretical dimension (developing scientific explanations for behavior), and the methodological dimension (testing scientific ideas)(Halonen, 2012).

I will personally benefit from the ideas developed to support the need for evidence-based interpretation of behaviors. For instance, I do have my values and preferences about the way

people believe or pray. Through this course, I now understand that I am not well equipped to interpret why the traditional ceremonies are very common in the Eswatini community.

Particularly, regards to my learning, among the 35 psychology-based Critical Thinking strategies, the following can help me to improve. For instance, the ‘Chunking strategy’. Applying this strategy could help me break down the information I read in course materials and keep it handy in my memory. Equally important are the ‘fundamental attribution error strategies. Applying this to my procrastination habit, I discovered that the cause is not a lack of time to do my assignment closer to the deadline. Lack of organization is by far the attributable cause. Spaced repetition is also crucial to keep a fresh memory of what I read through the various course materials.

Critical Thinking is highly important in Education. The main purpose of education is to help students to become more effective thinkers. Teachers and learners have to improve their abilities to generate ideas (creative thinking), evaluate the ideas (Critical Thinking), and ultimately combine those two to solve everyday life problems.

Dr. Muhammad Ilyas Khan (2020) affirms that Critical Thinking helps teachers to ask good questions. Those questions are for instance: what am I teaching? Who am I teaching? How am I teaching? And most importantly ‘Why am I teaching what I am teaching? Answering these questions, make the teacher, experience a fundamental shift from knowledge disseminator to a critique of knowledge. They may also help the teacher to question the methodology and adapt it to the audience made up of students of various capacities, attitudes, and aptitudes.

Besides, on the side of students, Critical Thinking helps them to become better learners, actively engage in the class, to question the teacher’s stance, question the learning materials and the

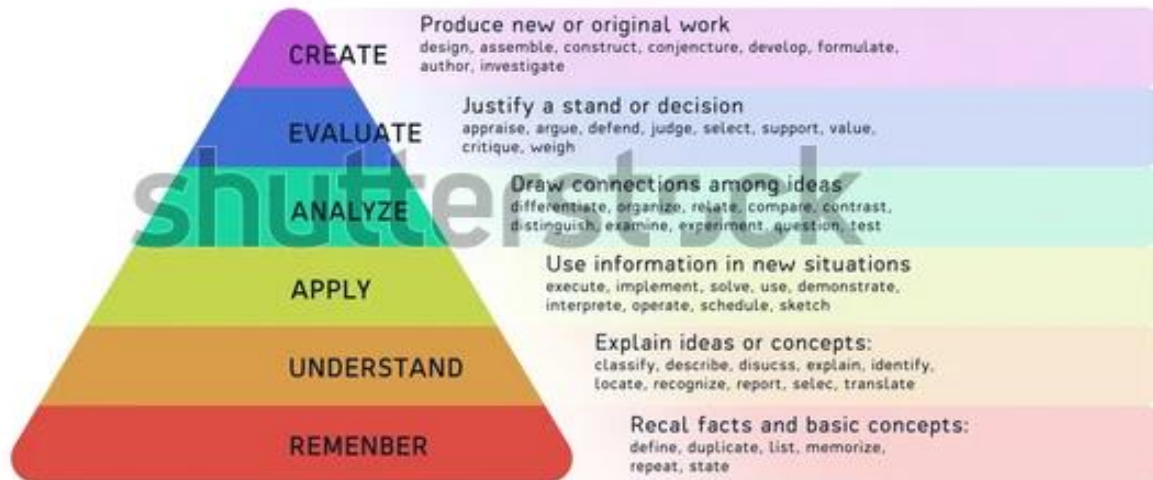
textbooks, and become independent learners. Moreover, Critical Thinking leads students to become more open-minded and more humble(Video Youtube, 2020).

Another concept to discuss on this topic is ‘complex thinking’. Complex thinking is thinking logically, critically, and creatively. People who are strong in complex thinking are capable of deeply understanding ideas and concepts, able to see connections among information from various sources, and capable to demonstrate imagination, constructing and defending arguments grounded on evidence and facts. The ultimate result of a complex thinking effort is to develop new ideas and draw inferences from limited information.

On the contrary, people with challenges in this level of thinking, are likely to strain to understand new ideas and concepts without the support and struggle “reading between the lines” or making inferences. They often haphazardly approach problems or tend to be satisfied with the existing ideas rather than invent new ones.

Benjamin Samuel Bloom, an American educational psychologist(2022), proposed the criteria based on the evaluation while ranking the level of thinking. From lower to higher levels, he proposed these verbs: remember, understand apply, analyze, evaluate and create(Video Youtube, 2022). This Taxonomy is a good tool as it can help students to better learn, teachers to better teach but also it can be applied in everyday life to find better solutions to problems.

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY



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Let us apply this questioning technique to study the problem of Staff Motivation:

Level 1: Remember what one wants to study. This is staff motivation.

Level 2: Understand: what is staff motivation? To the worker, these are the internal and external factors that are put together to make him more productive and enjoy the work.

Level 3: Apply: What are the types of staff motivation applied in company X?

Level 4: Analyze: How effective is the policy of staff motivation applied in the company X comparatively the one in Y?

Level 5: Evaluate: What proportion of X company performance is attributable to their staff motivation policy?

Level 6: Create: Are there any other most effective ways to motivate the company X's staff different from those currently applied?

This assignment discusses also the six thinking hats method. The latter was first published in 1985 by a respected psychologist Dr. Edward de Bono. This is an effective method to use while looking at a decision from several considerable and relevant perspectives. It forces one to get a round view of the situation rather than relying on one's habitual thinking style. De Bono invented the 6 types of thinking and associate them with 6 different colors and each of them stands for a specific perspective as shown below (Semaphora, 2022).

The application of this method consists in putting on each of the Six Thinking Hats in turn. Hence, gain a rich understanding of the issues you face – and the best ways forward. In asking specific questions relevant to each hat and applying them to the problem you are solving, you are sure to come up with an accurate and fitting solution.

Six thinking hats

What are my powers when wearing each hat?



Asking questions:
- What do we know?
- What do we need to know?
- How do we get this information?



Expressing emotion:
- What are my gut feelings?



Judging:
- What are the difficulties
& weaknesses?



Being optimistic:
- What are the strengths
& opportunities?



Being creative:
- New ideas?
- New opportunities?
- How can it be improved?



Thinking about thinking:
- What's been learned?
- What's next?

(Semaphora, 2022).

The six thinking hats share the purpose and the final intention, which is to better understand the problem. In addition, they complement each other and none of them is sufficient enough if considered alone.

Thought and knowledge are another crucial component of Critical Thinking. This supposes that one is conscient and has some knowledge about his thinking. In any situation one could find himself in, good thinking pays off. Conversely, bad thinking is inevitably associated with problems, waste of time, frustration, and pain. It is essential to notice that studies about thinking or serious thinking about thinking are rare. According to Dr. Linda and Collaborators from the Critical Thinking Association of Canada, it is surprising how human being pays little interest in the way they think. Thinking is not a subject in college universities and people's

cultures. cultures. Although it is so, thinking influences what we feel or want(Linda and coll,2022).

The above authors advise everyone to become a critic of his thinking. in practice, some strategies are proposed for those who want to start thinking at a higher level.

these are:

1. To clarify ones thinking: Clear thinking is the ability to express ideas simply and straightforwardly. It also involves the ability to analyze statements and follow logical arguments. Applying this to everyday experiences, I want to consider the following example.

Example: A CEO of a company who declares in a meeting with the personnel that” As it is obvious to everybody, this year, you have in general performed poorly. Consequently, some allowances will be cut down”. This statement is not clear for the following reasons:

- it presents suppositions (....as it is clear to everyone).
- It lacks supporting evidence (... you have a poor performance).
- It proceeds with generalization (...you have in general performed poorly)
- It is ambiguous (.....some allowances to be cut down).
- It lacks legal support (....on which basis will the allowances be cut down?).

To the above CEO, I would ask the following questions to clarify his thinking:

- Can you please explain your point in other words? I failed to understand you clearly.
- Can you give us examples? Like which performance are you talking about? Who performed poorly and who did well? Which department is concerned? Can you give us an analogy illustrating how we performed poorly this year compared to the previous years?

This does not mean that the CEO is not right, in saying that the overall performance is poor. He may be right, but the way he is bringing up his ideas is vague and full of suppositions and thus confusing.

2. Stick at one point. In the above example, there is no direct connection between the fact that the company is not working well on one hand and the other the decision to cut down the personnel's allowances. It would presumably be logical to present the state of the company's performances as the main issue and focus on it, then look into the potential causes of such downfall and finally propose solutions to the problem at hand. Otherwise, it would be a confusing statement just begging for questions.

3. Question the questions: Many people don't have the skills to ask good questions. Most accept the world just as it appears. If they dare ask, their questions are often incomplete or "vague." Others don't question at all; they just accept the situation as it is presented. In the scenario of the CEO and workers, it would be shocking if everyone keeps quiet, without asking a single after that statement. Then, if some dare asks questions, one would need to examine how basic, essential and deep the questions are.

4. Reasonable: in the above scenario, we may qualify the CEO as reasonable if he/ she listens to the worker's reactions to his/ her statement and allows a discussion on that matter. Moreover, if given clear reasons to give more explanation about the company situation and accepts to adapt his opinions to the general assembly's most relevant ideas, in that case, he would qualify as reasonable while on the contrary, he would be termed closed-minded.

Some of the behaviors or characters are a barrier to Critical Thinking abilities. Among others, immaturity in adults is one of the most important. Immaturity seen from the Critical

Thinking perspective is defined as simply behavior that is manifested by someone who only thinks of him/ herself. Maturity is generally judged by considering how well someone complies with the social and economic order. That is not an accurate definition of maturity. For Critical Thinking purposes, immaturity is simply defined as behavior coming from someone who thinks of himself or herself and only him/or herself. In other words, they are selfish, uncaring, self-centered, and self-absorbed. They feel they are better, different, and superior to everybody. Such a person's thinking is distorted, falsely reoriented to themselves, their advantages, and their interests. All the remaining people are nothing more than objects he can use to fulfill his interests and dump without any kind of care or remorse.

In young people, this definition is quite different. This is a student or a child who always needs special attention and care from adults because he fails to integrate with peers. They fear relationships, competition, being compared to peers, or lack the confidence to work on their own. Actions to take. One has to bear in mind that the immature student is often far from being satisfied just by answers from the teacher/ parent. He/she seeks attention above all.

Some solutions may help to manage and improve the immaturity in young children or students. Firstly, parents, educators, or teachers have to provide the student /child with attention before he/ she seeks it. With this approach two advantages are to be expected: Firstly, the student will get what they need; the attention and they need it to operate effectively in the classroom. Secondly, in the process, the student develops a better independent work habit. Positive and negative reinforcement are additional ways to help immature children. This consists I rewarding their effort with an item (ie.: toys, games...) the one they are known to like the most. On the contrary, you prevent them from accessing what they like as long as they are not responding to

the required effort. This technic works by replacing the immaturity-related advantages with genuine advantages gained in rewarding the appreciated efforts.

The last but not least concept to discuss in this assignment is metacognition. According to Nancy Chick (2013), metacognition means thinking about one thinking. Put in simpler terms Metacognition refers to the method used in planning, monitoring, and assessing one's understanding and performance. It includes a critical awareness of one's thinking and learning combined with the awareness of oneself as a thinker and learner(Chick, 2013).

On another hand, other writers attempted to define metacognition in their turn. For instance, smith- Ferguson (2020) describes “metacognition” as a person’s internal dialogue reflecting on how they think and understand. It is also a realization of how that understanding and thinking can change atandnd develop over time. Ultimately, metacognition is about using this knowledge on the thinking and then improving it”(Smith-Ferguson, 2020). According to this writer, the process on which the metacognition is built makes it the pillar of Critical Thinking. Cognition seeks to make sense of the world, while metacognition seeks to make sense of cognition(Smith-Ferguson, 2020).

In application, let us take an example of myself learning “Health Care Management” Based on the metacognition strategies as suggested by both authors mentioned above, they will consider the following steps:

1. Pre assessments—here, I am advised to examine my Current Thinking: *“What do I already know about ‘Health care management’ that could guide me in learning it?”*

2. The Muddiest Point: at this step, I am encouraged to identify the confusion:
“What was most confusing to me about the course material handed on Health care management?”
3. Retrospective Post-assessments: at this step, I have to recognize the conceptual change: *“Before this course, I thought Health care management was... Now I think that Health care management is”* or *“How is my thinking changing (or not changing) over time?”*
4. Reflective evaluation this step provides room to monitor my thinking.: what worked well for my assignment/ exam that I should remember to practice next time? Then what did not work well that I have to change next time?

Conclusion

In conclusion, Critical Thinking is fundamental for everybody to improve their thinking level in a purpose to make the correct decision and adequately solve our problems on daily basis. This assignment developed the main practical aspects of Critical Thinking and their application in our everyday life in general and particularly in education. These are the psychological thoughts and their application, Critical Thinking in Education, and the six hats of Critical Thinking. It also discussed how to become a better listener, a better questioner, and a better critical thinker. And finally the concepts of Immature Behavior and Metacognition.

Critical Thinking is a practical skill that pays off. As suggested Lee Crockett, citing Aristotle and Francis Bacon respectively:” It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”—*Aristotle*. "Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider."—*Francis Bacon*. (Crockett, n.d.).

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