

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING AS THE PRIMARY GOAL OF EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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Abstract

Critical thinking is a dominant concept in educational improvements that call for institutes to place a greater emphasis on skills that are used in all subject areas and that students can apply in all educational, career, and civic situations throughout their lives.

Key words: critical thinking; students; skills; requirements; education; knowledge; approach

Abstract

Gândirea critică este un concept dominant în dezvoltarea educațională, care solicită instituțiile să pună un accent mai mare pe abilitățile care sunt utilizate la toate disciplinele și pe care studenții le pot aplica în toate situații educaționale, de carieră și civice de-a lungul vieții.

G Randy Kasten, a prominent expert in the field of critical thinking, believes that development of this skill in students will benefit them in many different ways throughout their lives. Benefits of critical thinking are not restricted to workplace alone as an individual can use this skill to understand things and solve problems at all places. There is no universally accepted definition of critical thinking but most experts believe it is the ability to understand why things are the way they are. It also enables them to understand the consequences of their actions. Therefore, critical thinking is a skill that helps in preparing students to easily cope with situations in real life.

The skill of thinking critically is generally accepted as a very vital stage in every field of learning, particularly in the last years, being one of the most valuable life skills a person can possess. It is the ability to think logically, clearly, and rationally. Critical thinking is actually an approach used to reason and reflect in a systematic way. It enables us to think about a topic in an objective and critical manner, helping us to understand various points of view. For teachers, it serves as the hallmark of knowing when students shift from dependent learning to independent learning, something we all want our students to be able to do.

What are some goals and essential aspects of critical thinking in

education? Critical, thinking involves asking questions, defining a problem, examining evidence, analyzing assumptions and biases, avoiding emotional reasoning, avoiding oversimplification, considering other interpretations, and tolerating ambiguity. The ultimate goal of critically thinking is to solve problems or make decisions. This is achieved by mentally processing information in a clear, logical, reasoned, and reflective manner so you can understand things better. Universities across the world are in an endless development. According to the requirements, institutions make appropriate changes in their schooling processes to give their students an advantage over the others. One of the skills which is in high request stands for critical thinking. Nowadays it becomes necessary to teach students how to distinguish between right and wrong. Moreover, professional world of today requires a high level of critical thinking to filter information that appears to be limited or influenced. At any rate, institutions are capable of handling challenging situations effortlessly.

What is the importance of critical thinking? Critical thinking is the ability of a person to reflect beyond what is being communicated. It is generally related with a strong sense of awareness and the desire to identify unfamiliar things.

How Do Critical Thinking Skills Benefit Students? Since critical thinking isn't exactly an academic subject, it needs to be instructed aside from traditional education. Not only does critical thinking allows students to excel in academics, but also leaves the basis upon which all future knowledge and information are gained. One way to integrate critical thinking skills in classrooms is to encourage open discussion on numerous issues. These discussions can be improved by asking questions and showing that questions are nothing to be afraid of. Critical thinking is all about the why's and how's, and students need to be taught of its importance. It improves problem-solving and decision-making skills too. It allows students to think about the things clearly, allowing them to make better decisions and learning from them along the way. The skills that we need in order to be able to think critically are varied and include the following:

Observation- the ability to notice and predict opportunities, problems and solutions; **Analyses-** the gathering, understanding and

interpreting of data and other information. **Communication**-sharing and receiving information with others verbally, nonverbally and in writing. **Evaluation** – critically evaluating how strong and valid are different points of view, including any weaknesses or negative aspects in the evidence or argument. **Inference**-drawing conclusions based on relevant data, information and personal knowledge and experience. **Problem solving**-the process of gathering, analyzing and communicating information to identify and troubleshoot solutions. Specifically, we need to be able to: think about a topic or issue in an objective and critical way, identify the different arguments that are in relation to a particular issue, evaluate a point of view to determine how strong or valid it is, recognize any weaknesses or negative points that are in the evidence or argument, notice what implications there might be behind a statement or argument, provide structured reasoning and support for an argument that we wish to make. How to improve your critical thinking skills? This sounds simple enough, but how should we develop these critical thinking skills? The good news is that substantial evidence shows that critical thinking can be learned. A key principle like ‘think logically’ is not a useful goal.” In other words, teaching critical thinking is best done within a specific context. Students need to be involved in the subject matter and given opportunities to develop content-specific critical thinking skills. Good teachers will design various strategies to help their students acquire the specific critical thinking skills associated with each subject. Critical thinking is about more than acquiring knowledge. It is connected to both problem solving and decision making. It always has a goal, to solve a problem or come to a decision. For example, students might apply critical thinking at any lesson to work out the best way to approach their group project. They make decisions such as who will complete each task, in what time frame. They solve problems like how and where they will meet outside of school hours to work together. These might sound like small steps, but they try to do their best by making bigger decisions and solving the larger problems they’ll face in the future. Critical thinking enables us to make wise, rational decisions rather than reactive ones. Critical thinking skills will prepare young people to solve the world’s complex problems, such as the need for wise management of resources. Furthermore, critical thinking is related to creativity. As Wasabis

Learning explain, critical thinking in most professions relies heavily on the ability to be creative. They note that creative people question assumptions and ask “how?” or “why not?” rather than focusing on limitations.

Some essential skills that are the basis for critical thinking are:

- Communication and Information skills
- Thinking and Problem-Solving skills
- Interpersonal and Self- Directional skills
- Collaboration skills

These skills students **need** in any field and in all levels of education. So, students should be taught to think critically and for themselves. One of the goals of education is to prepare students to acquire information through discovery. Providing opportunities to practice being critical thinkers will assist students in analyzing others’ thinking and examining the logic of others. Understanding others is an essential skill in collaboration and in everyday life. Critical thinking will allow students to do more than just memorize knowledge. When you are asking students questions and they provide a solution, try some of these to promote further thinking:

- Will you express that point in another way?
- Can you give me an illustration?
- Would you give me an example?
- Will you provide more details?
- Could you be more specific?
- Do we need to consider another point of view?
- Is there another way to look at this question?

Utilizing critical thinking skills could be seen as a change in the standard of teaching and

learning. Engagement in education will enhance the collaboration among teachers and students. It will also provide a way for students to succeed even if the education system had to start over. Teachers should allow students to become critical thinkers because they will have to create their own product with the supplies that are given to them. This might be an elementary example, but it’s one we can relate to any grade level or project. Try not to jump to help too fast – let the students work through a **productive struggle**. **Build in opportunities for students to find**

connections in learning. Encouraging students to deal with real life situations and identify patterns is a great way to practice their critical thinking skills. Other techniques to encourage critical thinking are: communication and Information skill, thinking and problem-solving skills, interpersonal and self- directional skills, collaboration skills. Critical thinking prepares students to think for themselves for the rest of their lives. It is known that critical thinkers are less likely to go along with the crowd *because* they think for themselves. In order to be critical thinkers, educators need to provide students with the strategies they need. And they need to ask more than just surface-level questions. Questions to students must motivate them to dig up background knowledge.

The need to develop critical thinkers has never been as urgent as it is now. In a world that is digitally focused and where there is an outpouring of information surfeit, students need to be equipped with the right tools to live up to the new learning exigencies. Critical thinking as a skill is the mother of all other skills and one that underpins and solidify students overall learning. Critical thinking is a disruptive cognitive process that explores alternative ways of thinking about something with the purpose of uncovering silent and untold meanings. Critical thinkers do not settle with the obvious and the taken for granted. They always delve into the deep layers of meaning and engage in profound intellectual altercations to formulate a better and holistic understanding. In a world where information obesity is the norm, critical thinking skills become essential survival skills. They can make a whole difference between information and disinformation. Questions to help students develop critical thinking are: What's happening? Gather the basic information and begin to think of questions. Why is it important? Ask yourself why it's significant and whether or not you agree. What don't I see? Is there anything important missing? How do I know? Ask yourself where the information came from and how it was constructed. Who is saying it? What's the position of the speaker and what is influencing them? What else? What if? What other ideas exist and are there other possibilities? The 'Path to Critical Thinking for students could be: to think deeply to make relevant connections, to ask quality and clarification questions, to use evidence and reasoning to support thinking, to analyze, reason, and evaluate, to interpret information beyond surface learning, to synthesize

diverse ideas, to make reasoned decisions ,to generate and evaluate options prior to making decisions, to focus on details to derive meaning, to apply higher levels of thought to real world situations, to think critically on a daily basis, to use criteria to judge the value of ideas and solutions, to question the credibility, accuracy, and relevancy of information and sources, to assess consequences of actions or ideas .

However, becoming a critical thinker is much more about developing consistent critical thinking habits in our approach to ideas and opinions. To help your students develop these habits, be sure to encourage intellectual curiosity in the classroom. Ask students to examine their own assumptions and evaluate these in light of opposing opinions and available evidence. Consistently insist that your students provide evidence to support their conclusions when they express opinions in classroom discussions. In time, the habit of critical thinking will inform how your students approach any new information that they come across. This will leave them better able to think clearly and systematically and better able to express themselves logically too.

In conclusion it should be mentioned that critical thinking is an important life skill that everyone needs to develop no matter what path is chosen. As educators, we have successfully accomplished our work when we can easily see our students as active learners instead of passive receivers of information. That is when we know we have developed critical thinkers. All these make the learning more unforgettable and meaningful. The critical need everywhere in the world is for education to prepare students to lead successful, fulfilling lives. In today's world, this means providing them with relevant educational experiences that nurture their passions, problem-solving abilities, and higher-level thinking skills, including critical thinking and creativity.

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