

Critical thinking in higher education
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Introduction

Critical thinking skills are considered to be a paramount importance in tertiary education. Some private universities in Uzbekistan have been using this skill effectively. Many teachers argue that students tend to assess the arguments of others as well as their own, tackle arguments with the help of critical thinking. Implementation of critical thinking skill into every university in our country is believed to be first and foremost step. Thinking critically, students can gain social empowerment, improve communication, employability and networking. According to Tsui (2002), education of cognitive skill along with critical thinking can allow people to ameliorate their functioning in many situations. Some researchers and educators put a great emphasis on the importance of critical thinking pedagogy in higher education. However, they also claimed that how such skills could be encouraged through instruction. It is argued that if critical thinking is articulated in teaching subject specific knowledge and skills, critical thinking instruction tends to show students productivity in education while others feel that they ought to be taught separately because critical thinking skills are a generalized subset of skills. (Ennis, 1989)

Conceptions of critical thinking

There used to be always disagreement on the definition of critical thinking and the interpretation of critical thinking has been done in different way. Edward Glaser (1942) wrote that critical thinking is defined as an approach and logical application of competence in problem-solving contexts. According to Elder and Paul (2009), critical thinking skill is interpreted not only information but it is also belief generating and processing skill. Researchers are often in dilemma whether it can be learned or it is a procedure which is connected with personality trait, disposition or motivation.

While Banning (2006) pointed out that Critical thinking includes assessing data, distinguishing and scrutinizing, Brookfield (1987) noted that the significance of thinking critically is to analyze notions for validity and to detect challenges. Other researchers prove that this skill requires controlling to evaluate the capability of thinking, knowledge, the ability to challenge one's thinking. According to Simpson and Courtney (2002), the requirement of critical thinking involves initiative, active argumentation, envisaging, identifying complicated alternatives, reasoning along with making contingency-related value judgements. It is interesting to note that However, if critical thinking cultivation plays a fundamental role in tertiary education, how to teach them and what strategies and tips are necessary to cultivate critical thinking?

How to teach and implement critical thinking in Higher education:

Acker (2003, autumn) stated that excellent teachers use a sense of humor during the lesson and encourage them to think critically and solve problems. Outstanding teachers tend to create academic atmosphere by promoting them to think and ask questions and by allowing them to analyze information before making a big decision and tackle the problem. According to Braun (2004), He gave useful ideas and laid a great emphasis on discussions and debates and also commented that students should be taught to investigate problems and categorize the information through making wise decision. In order to teach and evaluate the enhancement of these skills, critical thinking skills ought to be educated even though it is a daunting task.

Much of the literature reply to the question ‘‘Are critical thinking skills increased in an introductory level college leadership course that encourage active learning? One of the researchers, Glaser asserted that active learning tips and techniques seem to ascend the scope of critical thinking and he found that college students show dominance in thinking critically when compared to non-college students. Dr.Linda Elder (2004) claimed that a growing number of prospective teachers are neither educated to think critically nor taught how to make their students think in a critical way and she also states that education system ought to focus on teaching students the chief critical skills so as to overcome some academic issues.

Critical thinking skills are flourished while analyzing the research literature along with inductive and deductive logic reasoning skills. (Tremblay, Downey,2004). There is no doubt that students can cultivate critical thinking skills by visiting the library to do research or working with other students to do classroom assignment such as holding discussions and student presentation in the classroom.

In addition, Paul Vanderburgh (2005) argued that carrying out open-book exams and student-authored exam questions appear to improve students’ critical thinking. This method is believed to bring a tremendous benefit for active learning which definitely results in teaching higher level of critical thinking.

However, it is worth-mentioning that according to Ralph Clair there is a distinction between critical thinking and critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is argued to be linked to the education of children than adults (2004). But I never totally advocate this idea. Because, I think, adults should not be underestimated and critical teaching ought to be implemented in higher education.

The majority of the researchers asserted that there is a strong bond between foreign language acquisition and cognitive development. Students are not promoted to think critically due to the fact that the traditional instructional process gives incentives to students to receive ready-made information instead of questioning. However other methods and approaches denote that concurrent study of language and subject matter, with the form and sequence of language presentation dictated by content material are considered to be productive and valid techniques to foster critical thinking (Brinton, Snow, Welsche,1989). Brown (2007) also approve that intrinsic motivation is a result of critical thinking activities and content-based instruction. The utilization of a content-based approach creates different and fascinating topics from various subject matter into the language classroom. Furthermore, this approach gives teachers more chance for the usage of different pursuits which refers to students’ learning abilities rather than focusing only on their linguistic abilities. (Chamot,1995). Crocker and Bowden (2010, p.3) had also identical attitudes and claimed that fostering critical thinking skills provides learners a great motivation which leads to inner strong wish for self-improvement

Conclusion

Overall, it is apparent from the ideas of scholars, critical thinking skills play an integral part of education system which my literature review has investigated its’ efficacy in tertiary education as well as language teaching and pedagogy. As far as I am concerned, tertiary education should promote critical thinking on account of its endless benefit aforementioned. ‘‘If we understand critical thinking substantively, we not only explain the idea explicitly to our students, but we use it to give order and meaning to virtually everything we do as teachers and learners’’ (Paul 2004).

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