

## **CRITICAL THINKING: WHY IT MATTERS AND HOW TO DEVELOP IT IN THE CLASSROOM**

**N. Muydinova**

*Ferghana state University*

Critical thinking is a skill that is becoming increasingly essential in today's complex and rapidly changing world. It is the ability to analyze and evaluate information, arguments, and ideas in a rational and systematic manner, in order to arrive at well-informed, well-reasoned judgments. It is a way of thinking that helps individuals make better decisions, solve problems more effectively, and communicate more clearly and persuasively.

Why is critical thinking so important? In today's world, we are bombarded with information from all sides, often conflicting and confusing. We are also constantly faced with complex problems that require careful analysis and evaluation. In order to navigate this complex landscape, it is essential that individuals have the ability to think critically. Critical thinking also plays an important role in fostering creativity and innovation, as it encourages individuals to question assumptions, explore new ideas, and challenge the status quo.

So how can individuals develop their critical thinking skills? Here are a few tips:

1. Question assumptions: One of the first steps in developing critical thinking skills is to question assumptions. This means asking yourself why you believe something, and examining your underlying assumptions and biases.

2. Evaluate evidence: Critical thinking involves evaluating evidence and arguments in an objective and rational manner. This means looking at both the strengths and weaknesses of different arguments, and weighing the evidence accordingly.

3. Consider alternative perspectives: Critical thinking means being open to considering alternative perspectives and ideas. This involves recognizing that there may be multiple ways of looking at a problem or issue, and being willing to explore different points of view.

4. Be skeptical: Critical thinking also involves being skeptical. This means not accepting everything at face value, and being willing to ask probing questions to get at the truth.

5. Practice, practice, practice: Like any skill, critical thinking requires practice. This means engaging in activities that challenge your thinking and help you develop your analytical and evaluative skills. This might include

reading challenging texts, engaging in debates and discussions, or taking part in critical thinking exercises.

In fact, critical thinking skills are paramount not only for active learning and academic achievement but also for the professional career of the students. Certain strategies are more eloquent than others in teaching students how to think critically. Encouraging critical thinking in the class is indispensable for the learning and growth of the students. In this way, we can raise a generation of innovators and thinkers rather than followers. Some of the benefits offered by thinking critically in the classroom are given below:

- It allows a student to decipher problems and think through the situations in a disciplined and systematic manner
- Through a critical thinking ability, a student can comprehend the logical correlation between distinct ideas
- The student is able to rethink and re-justify his beliefs and ideas based on facts and figures
- Critical thinking skills make the students curious about things around them
- A student who is a critical thinker is creative and always strives to come up with out of the box solutions to intricate problems

Here are some activities that will facilitate the teacher to promote critical thinking abilities in the students.

**1. Worst Case Scenario.** The students are divided into teams and introduced with hypothetical challenging scenario. The scenarios can include situations like stranded on an island or stuck in a forest. Students will come up with creative solutions to come out from the imaginary problematic situation they are encountering

**2. If You Build It.** The students are divided into groups and given limited amount of resources such as pipe cleaners, blocks, and marshmallows etc. Every group is supposed to use these resources and construct a certain item such as building, tower or a bridge in a limited time.

**3. Zoom.** It is also one of the classics which can be used in the classroom to encourage critical thinking. Print pictures of objects, animals or concepts and start by telling a unique story about the printed picture. The next student is supposed to continue the story and pass the picture to the other student and so on.

**4. Keeping it Real.** In this activity, students are asked to identify a real-world problem in their schools, community or city. After the problem is

recognized, students should work in teams to come up with the best possible outcome of that problem.

5. Start a Debate. In this activity, the teacher can act as a facilitator and spark an interesting conversation in the class on any given topic. Give a small introductory speech on an open-ended topic. The topic can be related to current affairs, technological development or a new discovery in the field of science.

In conclusion, critical thinking is an essential skill for navigating today's complex and rapidly changing world. By questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, considering alternative perspectives, being skeptical, and practicing regularly, individuals can develop their critical thinking skills and become better able to make well-informed, well-reasoned judgments.

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