

The importance of critical thinking



The Importance of Critical Thinking The explosion of the Internet and the plethora of material available has prompted Diane Halper (1998, p. 49) of California State University to write, " Advances in technology and changes in necessary workplace skills have made the ability to think critically more important than ever before". The student needs to analyse the credibility of the source, the motivation of the writer, and the validity of the arguments. When presented with a problem, the student needs to see the problem in unique ways that may uncover a novel solution. Critical thinking rises above the evaluation of inert facts and forces the student to put these facts into a model of relevance. University students should use critical thinking in their reading, research, and their writing.

Critical reading forces the student to think about the author's intentions and the meaning hidden behind the words. University readings require more than simply repeating facts or plots. It requires the student to use critical thinking to "... not only understand what they have read or been shown but also to build upon that knowledge without incremental guidance" (Why Teach Critical Thinking n. d.). Critical thinking allows the reader to question the writer's thesis or examine their facts. The information gained will be built upon during a lifetime of learning.

Critical thinking is mandatory when a university student is conducting research. Critical research demands that the student not only consider the source, but also the author's sources. Their own research must be viewed with a critical eye as to methodology and problematic areas. Glicken (2004, p. 43) argues that " One of the key elements of the scientific approach is a willingness to critically evaluate and test knowledge and theories". This will help eliminate errors and biases. Limitations and irregularities should be

noted when reading research. Critical thinking will also help determine if the research is unbiased or if the author had an agenda. These tactics will help the student evaluate previous research and determine where it will fit into their own research project.

Critical writing depends upon critical reading. Without a critical reading of your sources you will not be able to use them critically in your argument (Knott 2000, p. 1). Critical writing demands that you present your argument in a cogent way that is supported by facts. The student needs to use their own critical thinking skills to review and revise their project. This helps eliminate weak arguments or biased evidence and in doing so it will strengthen the value of the research. All of these steps require critical thinking.

In conclusion, all of our critical skills rely on critical thinking. A university student needs to evaluate and create material that is substantial and credible. Reading must be done with a critical eye towards the meaning of the work. Research demands continual critical thinking to assure that the methods are sound and the information is reliable. Relating the findings of research requires critical writing so that the reader will be clear and the substance will be interesting and persuasive. There is no more basic skill that a university student can possess than critical thinking.

References

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