



EC SO6006: Skills for Life: Employability and Future Pathways

Theme 3: Professional Aspects of Employability

Part 3: Developing a Professional Mindset

Professionalism in the Workplace

- In Part 2 of this Theme, we discussed the importance of organisational culture and its influence on worker satisfaction
- However, the main focus of this Module is your own personal and professional development
- So, to continue this Theme we will return to look at what we mean by professionalism in the workplace and how an individual can demonstrate this

Key Attributes of Professionalism in the Workplace

- Indeed.com list the top 10 attributes of professionalism in the workplace on their recruitment website
- Although there is some repetition their current list is as follows;
 - Responsibility
 - Reliability
 - Accountability
 - Organisation
 - Etiquette and manners
 - Consideration
 - Morality and ethics
 - Integrity
 - Dedication
 - Expertise

Why are we using Indeed as a source?

- [Indeed](#) are one of the largest recruitment companies in the world and as such a good source for potential employment and advice
- We will take a moment to look at these attributes in more detail.
- Indeed are one of the recommended sources for employment opportunities on the [Prospects](#) graduate employment website
- Finally, Indeed has proven useful in the past;

'Hi Ken,

I just thought I would give you some positive feedback on the employability module. As a direct result of me uploading an updated CV onto Indeed, I received an e-mail this morning from a company who want to have a chat with me about some possible employment with them, working with their outreach school's team. They are going to contact me this afternoon'.

(Goddard, 2019)

Key Attributes of Professionalism in the Workplace

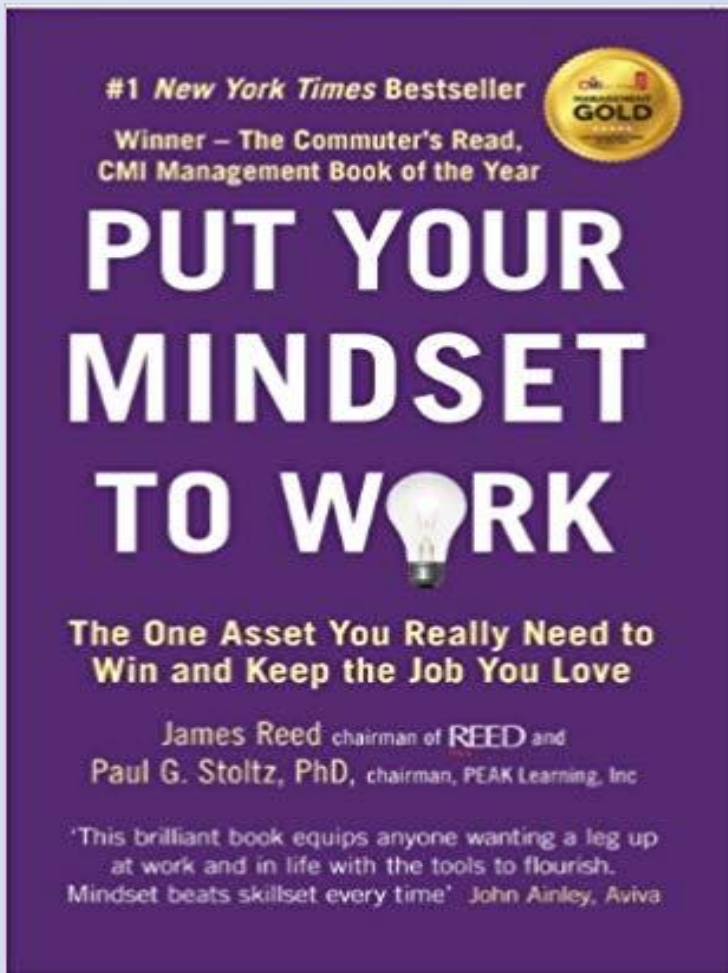
- These are the reasons that we have chosen Indeed but you will be able to find other lists in other sources

Personal Research Skills

If you are researching anything to do with your own career planning what do you need to consider?



Skillset versus Mindset



- This discourse forms a key part of this text
- It also uses the phrase 'mindset' that features in the [Aim](#) for this Module
- How would you check that this is a reliable source?

Skillset versus Mindset

Discussion Point

What do you understand to be the difference between a skillset and a mindset?

If you need to research your answer use reliable sources



Skillset versus Mindset

Skillset

- Put simply, 'A skill set is the knowledge, abilities, and experience needed to perform a job' (Doyle, 2020).
- As Doyle goes on to state; it 'is the combination of knowledge, personal qualities, and abilities that you've developed through your life and work'.
- This has been the focus of much traditional career development theory
- However, there is a growing consensus that having a good skillset is not enough

Skillset versus Mindset

- For example, Hugh Andree, the founder of [ForceSelect](#) states that;
- ‘I don't want to underestimate the importance of skills, but skills become obsolete, especially these days. What is it that underpins those skillsets? It is the winning mindset.’ (*cited in [Anon, 2011](#)*)
- As a result there is now much more emphasis on how we **think** as well as what we **can do**
- And this is what Reed and Stoltz argue in *Put Your Mindset to Work*

Skillset versus Mindset

Mindset

- For example they state that;
- ‘Employers rank mindset above skillset when it comes to decisions on recruitment and promotion’
- ‘Employers believe that people with the right mindset are far more likely to develop the right skillset than the other way round’
- ‘Employers don't know what sort of skills they will want in 10 years, but they know what mindset they will want’

So What is a Mindset?

- Again, different sources will give you different definitions
- However, what is clear is that the concept has clear links with the **cognitive skills** and theories of [metacognition](#) that we have looked at before.

What do you understand these two phrases to mean?



So What is a Mindset?

- A person's **mindset** can be seen to include among other things;
- Self-discipline
- Problem-solving
- Creative thinking
- Critical thinking, and
- Planned Happenstance (in terms of Career Development – see Theme 3)
- We will look at each of these in turn.

Self discipline

What is self discipline?

- Is it Commitment?
- Is it Perseverance?
- Is it Willpower?

Or...

- Is it Planning and organisation?

As a group, discuss what you consider 'self-discipline' to be.

What does it look like in the workplace?

How does one demonstrate it?

Self-discipline

- In 'Self-Discipline Gives Girls the Edge', Duckworth & Seligman (2006, p.201) define self-discipline as;
- 'the ability to suppress prepotent responses in the service of a higher goal '

Paraphrasing exercise: What is this quote saying?



N.B. In this context prepotent refers to 'the stimulus which determines the response when stimuli with conflicting responses occur together' (OED)

- You might also know of it as 'deferred gratification'
- Duckworth & Seligman go on to argue that 'such a choice is not automatic but rather requires conscious effort'.
- Thus, self-discipline is avoiding an immediate or easy option in order to achieve future reward

Self-discipline

- Duckworth & Seligman (2006, p.201) go on to give the following examples;
- ‘deliberately modulating one’s anger rather than having a temper tantrum’;
- ‘reading test instructions before proceeding to the questions’;
- ‘paying attention to a teacher rather than daydreaming’;
- ‘saving money so that it can accumulate interest in the bank’;
- ‘choosing homework over TV’; and
- ‘Persisting on long-term assignments despite boredom and frustration’.

Are any of those familiar?

Problem solving

- Once again, different sources will suggest different lists.
- However, these lists are often lists of 'skills' such as;
- The ability to actively listen
- The ability to analyse the task in hand
- The ability to communicate and ask further questions (which are relevant)
- The ability to think independently and 'outside the box'
- The ability to work with others to problem solve...
- *Any others you can think of?*

Problem solving Mindsets

- However, as we are dealing with **mindsets** in this session it might be more productive to think of this as a series of **cognitive** approaches to dealing with a problem
- For example Cottrell (2013, p. 91) outlines a number of creative problem solving approaches as follows;
- Mind-set (Reframing)
- Time
- System
- Knowledge
- Preparation
- We will take a little time to look at each in turn

Problem solving Mindsets

Mindset (reframing)

- Cottrell uses this phrase to mean changing the way the you perceive a problem (hence reframing)
- She suggests that you see the problem not as a test to be passed or failed but as 'puzzle' to be solved

Time

- In this case the approach is not to jump straight in to finding solutions
- Instead, one should give oneself time to tease out exactly what the nature of the problem is before seeking solutions

Problem solving Mindsets

System

- Create a logical, staged approach to the problem solving
- Do not just respond to stimuli but work out where each piece of information fits into the puzzle

Knowledge

- Think about what you already know about the problem or similar problems
- Have you experienced any similar situations that can provide solutions?
- If not what information can you find to help you?

Problem solving Mindsets

Preparation

- Bring together your knowledge, experience and research together
- Work out where in your systematic approach they are most use
- Then work through your system methodically

Sharing (not included in Cottrell)

- Is there a friend or colleague who may have similar experience that you can talk the problem through with?
- Is there a Mentor, Supervisor or Line Manager who might be able to contribute information?

Creative thinking

- As with the other concepts in this Part of Theme 2 you can find any number of definitions of what constitutes **creative thinking**
- However, **Creative thinking** can be seen to include;
- Creating new ideas in specific contexts;
- Seeing existing situations in a new way or from a new angle;
- Identifying alternative explanations;
- Seeing or making links between disparate facts or situations to create a new way of working

Creative Thinking Mindsets

- When looking at creative thinking some of the advice might contradict the logical, sequential methods outlined by Cottrell above
- For example, Roberto (2019) in *Unlocking Creativity: How to Solve Any Problem and Make the Best Decisions by Shifting Creative Mindsets* talks about breaking away from a number of ‘traditional’ mindsets, including;
 - The linear mindset;
 - The benchmarking mindset;
 - The structural mindset; and,
 - The Naysayer mindset;

We will briefly look at each of these in turn

Creative Thinking Mindsets

Removing Linear Mindsets

- The traditional linear mindset follows a linear sequence (hence the name)
- Thinking and planning is sequential, e.g. one target builds on another or is month by month
- Roberto argues that creative thinking is non-linear, it involves repeated iterations of the problem (from different perspectives), experimentation and the use of feedback loops 
- An example would be Dropbox (cloud-based file sharing), rather than going through the full planning process the company produced a short video describing what they intended to do.
- This went viral, 75,000 people signed up to test the product and their feedback led to a successful launch

Creative Thinking Mindsets

Removing Benchmarking Mindsets

- The traditional benchmarking mindset looks to the biggest competitor and asks 'how can we copy what they do?'
- This leads to trying to be a copy of your competitor, to be No. 1
- Roberto argues that, whilst keeping up with the competition is important, copying is not the best way to do this (fixation)
- Can you beat a competitor at their own game when they wrote the rules? Roberto suggests changing the rules
- An example would be Avis Car Rental who were the second biggest rental company. They came up with a campaign which turned this to their advantage

"Avis is only No. 2. in rental cars. So we try harder."

Creative Thinking Mindsets

Removing the Structural Mindset

- According to Roberto the structural mindset occurs when a large organisation feels that it has become 'stale' and uncreative.
- In a traditional organisation the temptation is either to move staff within the existing structure
- Or to 're-structure' the organisation
- This can work but if it doesn't then a more creative solution would be to create multi-departmental teams
- The Pixar film company took this approach when production on a film had stalled, the Director still had over-all control but a 'braintrust' made up of different staff helped to assess the problem

Creative Thinking Mindsets

Removing the Naysayer Mindset

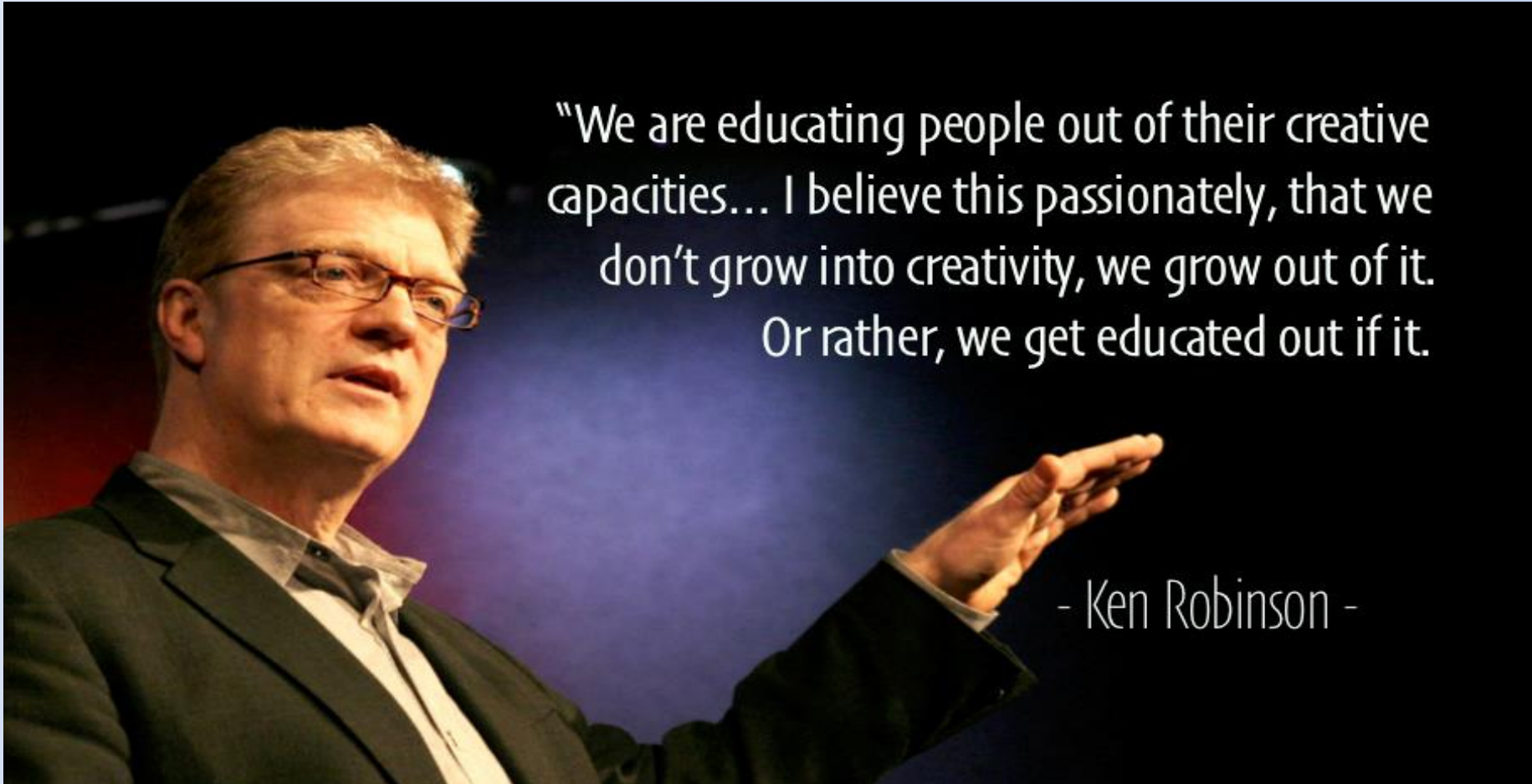
- This mindset might also be described as being ‘risk averse’.
- Roberto argues that, although it is a good thing to play ‘devil’s advocate’ and ask “What if it doesn’t work?”,
- This becomes counter-productive when that becomes “That won’t work because....”
- Roberto suggests that a potential project should be evaluated as though it had already happened and the analysis should be on what needed to happen to make the project work



Are we killing creativity?

- Some theorists go further than Roberto in criticising this lack of creativity
- They see the issue as being not with thinking within organisation but in the way that we are educated
- For example, Professor Graham Donaldson (2015, p18), whose report [Successful Futures](#) has shaped the curriculum in Wales has argued that education should move away from 'learning about' to 'learning to', with a growing skills focus and an emphasis on application and development of higher-order skills, particularly **creativity** (entrepreneurship) and digital literacy.
- Sir Ken Robinson goes further and argues that 'traditional' education actually teaches the creativity out of us

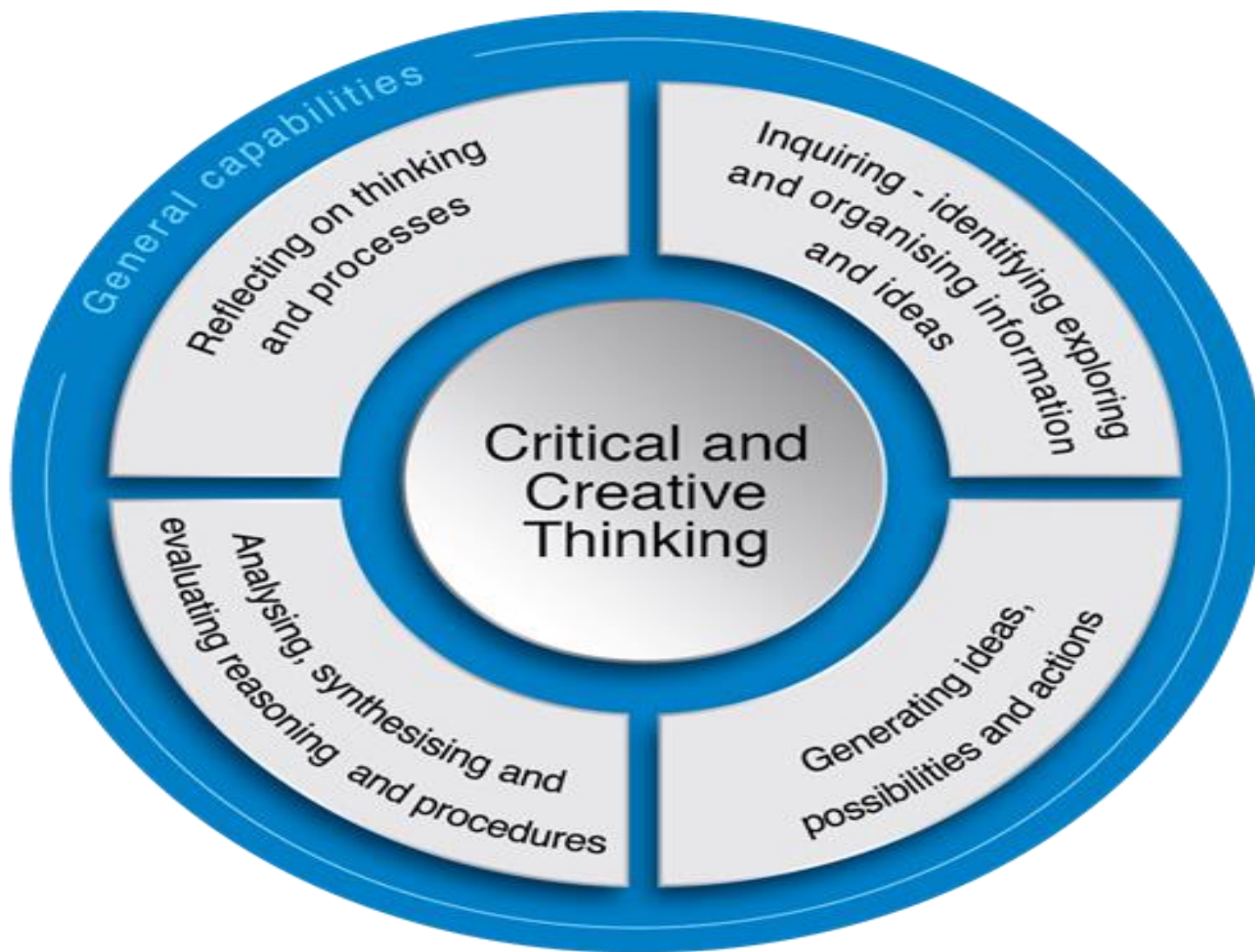
Sir Ken Robinson

A photograph of Sir Ken Robinson, a man with glasses and a dark suit, gesturing with his right hand while speaking. The background is dark with a blue light effect.

"We are educating people out of their creative capacities... I believe this passionately, that we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out if it.

- Ken Robinson -





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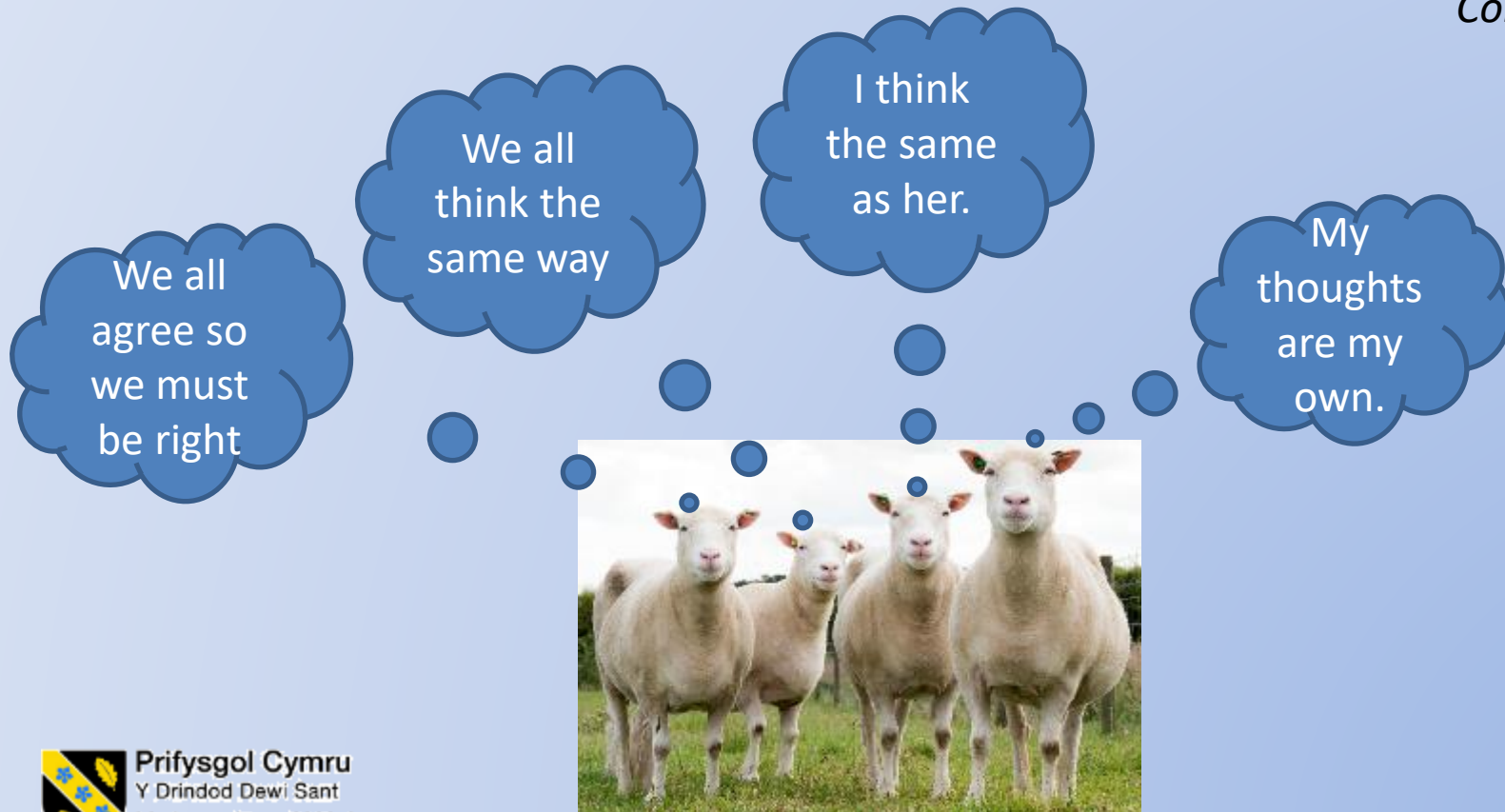
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Critical Thinking - What is it?

*"Study without reflection is a waste of time;
reflection without study is dangerous."*

Confucius



Critical thinking begins when you question beyond 'face value'.

A critical thinker wants to know.....

- how something happens,
- why it happens, and further;
- what will happen if something changes.

Critical thinking therefore requires a conscious level of processing, analysis, the creation and evaluation of possible outcomes, and reflection.

If you are a critical thinker, you think.

No surprise Sherlock!

However, the way that you think is important;

- You are willing to examine your beliefs, assumptions, and opinions and weigh them against facts.
- You are willing to evaluate the generalizations and stereotypes you have created,
- and are open to change, if necessary.

Critical thinkers listen carefully.

- If you are a critical thinker, you listen carefully to what others are saying and are able to give feedback.
- You are able to suspend judgment until all the facts have been gathered and considered.
- You are listening for what is implied as well as what is said

Critical thinkers look for evidence....

- If you are a critical thinker, you look for evidence to support your hypotheses.
- But you also look for evidence that contradicts your assumptions and beliefs
- You examine problems closely and are able to reject information that is incorrect or irrelevant.
- You look for facts behind the sound bites.

Therefore...through experience, as a critical thinker, you will:

- identify information that is being put forth as an argument and break it down to its basic components for evaluation.
- construct alternative interpretations.be willing to explore diverse perspectives.
- be willing to change personal assumptions when presented with valid information.
- be willing to ask difficult questions and the ability to receptive to opposing viewpoints.

Critical thinkers are curious.

- They are interested in knowing all there is about a topic.
- They look for new and better ways to do everything.
- They are not the person who will settle for “...because that is the way we have always done it.”

Higher Level Thinking Involves

- Evaluating
- Analysing
- Synthesizing
- Forming opinions
- Assessing
- Rating
- Making inferences
- Drawing conclusions
- Critiquing

And now for the Theory bit.....

Bloom's Taxonomy

- Educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom created a 'taxonomy' of learning objectives in 1956.
- This can also be thought of as a hierarchical classification of the levels of thinking
- *Thanks very much Ken, but what does that actually mean?*

How Can One Become a Critical Thinker?

- By asking pertinent questions (of self as well as others);
- By assessing statements and arguments;
- By developing a sense of observation and curiosity;
- By becoming interested in finding new solutions;
- By examining beliefs, assumptions, and opinions and weighing them against truth.
- By developing a “thinker’s vocabulary”.
- By listening carefully to others, thinking about what they say, and giving feedback;
- By observing with an open mind;
- By making assertions based on sound logic and solid evidence;
- By sharing ideas with others;
- By becoming an open-minded listener and reader;
- By engaging in active reading and active listening!

Everyone thinks...

“Everyone thinks. It is in our nature to do so. But so much of our thinking, left to itself, is biased, distorted, partial, uninformed, or downright prejudiced. Yet the quality of our life and that of what we produce depends on the quality of our thought.”

Richard Paul

Conclusion...

- Consider the content of this Theme in terms of how some of the skills, characteristics and behaviours apply to you and how these could be developed further for YOUR FUTURE.
- In Part 4 of this Theme we will take the idea of mindset and apply it to our career planning by looking at the concept of planned happenstance

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