Skills for critical thinking

Introduction

According to Cottrell(2017) critical thinking is a process of assessing and evaluating information in order to come to decisions that are more than likely to be correct and adequate. To be a critical thinker, one must question and evaluate everything that is said, heard and seen in all aspects of life and it contributes towards making better choices and coming to strong conclusions.

The University of Sussex (2009) suggests that critical thinking is a development of understanding and using the ability to question ideas, evaluating whether texts that include arguments are supported well and are clear in what they are trying to say, and writing texts must be well structured and understandable.

As defined by Burns and Sinfield (2016) "Critical thinking is the art of making clear, reasoned judgements based on interpreting, understanding, applying and synthesising evidence gathered from observation, reading and experimentation".

Time management

Time management is a vital skill to have as a student and can determine the overall outcome of an individual's performance. According to research.net (2012) effective time management can allow individuals to focus entirely on the task in hand and to properly conduct the research they need for their subject. Time management is an important skill as it is essential when developing a successful research (research.net, 2012). Furthermore, Dierdorff (2020) states that there are many strategies that can help an individual to better their skill of time management by doing things such as;

- Setting goals that are realistic
- Encouraging enough time for their planning and research
- Prioritising the task or focus that is at hand.

A key aspect to critical thinking is how one manages their time. According to Barnes (1994), people must make important decisions on how they spend their time in order to become successful in time management as they are able to priorities any work that is vitally important yet finding time for any other activities or hobbies. Similarly, Cottrell (2013) believes that setting early deadlines is beneficial for being good at time management as it gives the individual enough time to look over the work and make any changes that need to be done before turning in the final draft. Cottrell (2013) believes that changing the routine in order for the individual to not get unmotivated, and suggests that changes may include;

- having breaks of different lengths such as having a long break,
- doing some work then having a short break,

Furthermore, Newhall (2021) suggests that using a timer is a key point of time management as it gives the individual enough time to finish one task as when the is completed the task finishes immediately as the individual can then start on the next activity.

Research

Using an array of sources is vital in order for students to better the overall outcome of a specific subject as gathering as much information as possible is beneficial rather than choosing to use a variety of sources. Cottrell (2017) suggests that doing a lot of research using a variety of different sources is beneficial to become critical thinkers as the more research that is done on a particular subject. It is believed that research is beneficial when helping the individual to make valid decisions and knowing the relevant facts and the correct information they need to know on the subject (Cottrell, 2017).

According to the website aofirs.org (2021), using a combination of sources and collecting a variety of evidence contributes towards the amount of knowledge an individual will have on a specific subject. Stated by Davis (2021) there are many different methods of researching and this can be based on what a certain person is researching for; as someone that is researching for an interview would use a different method to a student that is researching for one subject in particular yet every method needs to have in-depth information on what they are researching as the more knowledge one has on a subject, the more successful the research.

The University of People (no date) presses on the importance of research as it is something that is used in all aspects of life, especially to students that are in higher education, as research can be considered to be a vital part of a students' university life. Furthermore Watanabe-Crockett (2016) suggests that finding new ways of researching is important as it allows individuals to find a way around their usual routine as it may give a new opportunity to find new information that may not have been used before and gaining new research skills can come from sources such as; podcasts, e-books, journals, surveys, articles and books.

Image: https://blog.tutorhub.com/2015/11/11/what-is-a-level-critical-thinking-useful-for/amp-on/

Taking notes

According to the website Skillsyouneed (2017) taking notes is an efficient way of engaging with ones reading as it is a process that will help to analyse what has been read and to retain any information one has learnt. Taking notes by hand is a more effective way of note taking rather than those who tend to use computers, as those who are writing out their notes tend to gain more information and emphasise more on their points (Skillsyouneed, 2017).

While taking notes, individuals need to ensure that the information they are writing is relevant, which corresponds to Godfrey (2013) idea that people develop their own understanding while note taking and recognises that key elements can be missed, and the individual will not have a clear understanding of the subject if note taking has not taken place. Godfrey (2013) believes gives suggestions on note-taking, such as reading the text first and summarising the key information they have learned in their own words.

However, The London school of science & Technology (2018) states that some students may forget things quickly as they hear things and taking notes is an effective way of keeping a record of what one has learned although there is not a correct way of taking notes, students must figure what technique works best for them by testing out different methods.

Cottrell (2017) explains that taking notes has several benefits over not note taking as it brings together all the information that has been learned is relevant to the subject and it is beneficial to reflect on what has been read and ask questions based on the subject such as;

- is the information relevant to the subject,
- does the evidence have support and what does the text really mean.

Reflecting on these things can ensure that the subject is based on the correct information, which contributes to a successful research.

Conclusion

Critical thinking is used in tasks that are carried out daily and skills such as taking notes, research and time management are all important in the development of critical thinking. Using these skills is a way of having an open-minded opinion on a variety of different situations and knowing the best way to deal with them. It also improves a person's knowledge of a topic that may have more than one answer, and it encourages things to be looked at with an open mind and looking deeper into something.

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