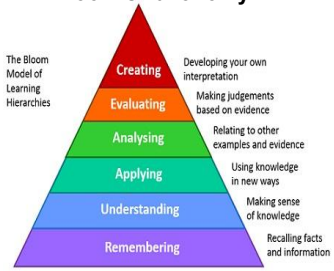
What is Critical Thinking?

"Critical thinking is a cognitive activity, associated with using the mind" (Cottrell, 2005, p.1). It is a process that enables a person to analyse information objectively, and to logically evaluate sources of information in order to form a fair conclusion (The University of Edinburgh, 2021).

Bloom's Taxonomy



(Source: The University of Sheffield 2021)

Research conducted by Bloom et al. (1956) produced Bloom's Taxonomy, which pinpoints the intellectual skills required for learning in education (London School of Management Education, 2019).

Critical thinking requires the ability to question and investigate information, rather than accepting it at face-value (Eales-Reynolds et al. 2013).

Who	... who benefits form this? ... is this harmful to? ... makes decisions about this? .... is directly affected?	... have you also heard discuss this? ... would be the best person to consult ... will be the key people is this? ... deserves recognition for this?
What	... are strength / weaknesses? ... is another perspective ... what is another alternative ... what would be a counter-argument?	... is the best/worst case scenario? ... is most/least important? ... can we do to make positive change? ... is getting away of our action?
Where	... would we see this in the real world? ... are there similar concepts/situations? ... is there most need of this? ... in the world would this be a problem?	... can we get more information? ... do we get help for this? ... will this idea take us? ... are the areas for improvement?
When	... is this acceptable/unacceptable? ... would this benefit our society? ... would this cause a problem? ... is the best time to take action?	... will we know we have succeeded? ... has this played a part in our history? ... can we expect this to change? ... should we ask help with this?
Why	... is this a problem / challenge? ... is it relevant to me / others? ... is this the best / worst case scenario? ... are people influenced by this?	... should people know about this? ... has it been this way so long? ... have we allowed this to happen? ... is there need for this today?
How	... is this similar to _____? ... does this disrupt things? ... do we know the truth about this? ... will we approach this safely?	... does this benefit us / others? ... does this harm us /others? ... do we see this in the future? ... can we change this for our good?

(Source: Rook Reading, 2018)

Note-making

As Cottrell (2013) states, note-making serves many purposes. Documenting relevant information in a brief yet organised manner provides a helpful record for future reference, promotes understanding on a particular subject, assists with revision/assignments and helps long-term memory. Research carried out by Piolat, Olive and Kellog (2005) and Bohay et al. (2011) supports this as they conclude that learning takes place both during the creation and reviewing of note-making. Cottrell (2013) suggests that the quality of note-making also impacts its effectiveness, and explains strategies can be undertaken such as noting keywords and summarising main ideas in your own words, Additionally, Mueller and Oppenheimer's study (2014) suggests that the format used when note-making also has an impact, as they concluded that keyboard performance did not support memory as well as longhand performance. However, Gilbertson (2021) points out that this was a small study that lacked a clear explanation and would require further research.

Time Management

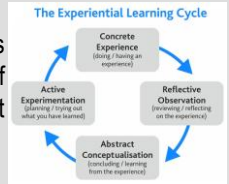
Time is the one indispensable and irreplaceable resource of accomplishment. It is your most precious asset. It cannot be saved, nor can it be recovered once lost. Everything you have to do requires time, and the better you use your time, the more you will accomplish, and the greater will be your rewards. (Tracy, 2013, p.1).

Planning ahead and managing time efficiently decreases stress levels and allows the individual to prioritise tasks, gain confidence, submit work on time and achieve better grades (Grade Power Learning, 2018). Furthermore, how successful you become in your studies can largely depend on how much time you put into learning and how productive you are during that time (Cottrell, 2013).

Reflection

According to Dewey (1933), reflection is a conscious decision and a means of delving into the reasons behind the outcome, for instance, why did an action result in a certain outcome? Schon (1983) expanded on these findings and presented the theory of 'Reflection in Action' and 'Reflection on Action,' which differentiates between reflection amid event and in hindsight of an event. His model of reflection is used to promote good practice skills as it continually encourages self-reflection and allows you to work on areas of development within your own work (All Answers, 2018).

The Experimental Learning Cycle was developed by Kolb (1984), a four stage cycle of how we learn, which is centred on the idea that knowledge can be gained through experience.



(Source: Simply Psychology, 2017)

Conclusion

To conclude, thinking critically provides opportunities to investigate information in a rational manner and explore an opinion/argument in a fair and logical way. It improves imagination and teaches efficient time management, promoting good problem-solving skills and best possible practice (Karakoc, 2016).

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