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# Thinking critically to critical thinking: the evolution of the concept of critique

The hegemonic conceptualizations of critical thinking in education curricula

The technicalization of critical thinking

The example of citizenship education in the NCfE

Conclusion

## What is critical thinking?

being critical thinkers is becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others (QAA, 2012: 4)

critical thinking enables the student to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth (QAA, 2012: 8)

critique refers to the evidential, conceptual, methodological and criteriological considerations upon which “effective reasoning” is based (QAA, 2012: 12)

# What is critical thinking?

## The theoretical presuppositions of CT

critical means *discerning judgment*. Discerning what?

- ✓ What to do to skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reach an answer or conclusion
- ✓ What in reasoning is clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence
- ✓ What is to believe or do...

## What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking as a skill

Tool for an effective reasoning

Critique is concerned with epistemology

No consideration of the interplay between epistemology and its historical and social conditions.

## **What is critical thinking?**

### **A critique of the ideological presuppositions of CT**

- ✓ Truth as independent of power, as a balance to power
- ✓ The independence of epistemology from its social and historical conditions
- ✓ truth is accessible if the appropriate methodology is used

# What is critical thinking?

## A critique of the theoretical presuppositions of CT

The fundamental structure:  
the concept of truth as the distinction between clarity and  
and darkness

Truth V caprice

Truth V superstitious

Truth V illusion

Critique as a tool to create clarity, to illuminate , to make  
things transparent.

## **What is critical thinking?**

### **A critique of the theoretical presuppositions of CT**

The idea is that truth is exempt from political and social battle

What is missed?

The role of power in producing domains of object for critical thinking

The historical and social conditions of every epistemology

The struggle for the definition of rules according to which truth is legitimized

Overlook this is the most important ideological implication of the concept of CT as set of cognitive skills



## An example: Being critical citizenship

What is the concept of citizenship which is introduced as statutory subject in NCfE?

Citizenship is a desirable 'outcome', a set of skills: *'the aim of citizenship education is to create active and responsible citizens'*

## An example: Being critical citizenship

Being active and responsible citizens means being critical citizens. But what does it mean?

According to the NCfE, it means understanding

- ✓ how information is used in public debate
- ✓ rights and responsibilities of consumers, employers and employees
- ✓ policies and practices for sustainable development
- ✓ political, legal, human rights in a range of context

CT does not include references to relationship between citizenship and its historical and social conditions, in favour of an ontological concept of citizenship

## **An example: Being critical citizenship**

Ideological background

The distinction between clarity and darkness is reproduced in the form of a distinction between public discourse involving critical citizens and the secret exercise of uncontrolled power

## **An example: Being critical citizenship**

The concept of opinion: opinion is the result of public debate. As long as the public debate is enlighten (critical), it is virtuous

the real condition of a possibility of opinion, the fact that media of opinion are not exempt from political and social battle

Opinion is a spontaneous re-activation of social contract.  
**Liberal democracy legitimizes itself**

## conclusion

**The hegemonic concept of critical thinking in education policies :**

offers a technical concept of critique as epistemological tool

relies on the idea that truth a-political

Overlooks the battle for the definition of the rules for the production of truth and the economic and political role that truth plays

# THANK YOU!



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