

Critical thinking session at the pedagogy workshop in September 2020

Participants Responses on the Importance of Critical Thinking in their Various Academic Disciplines and some personal stories on the subject. (Collected by Jeremiah V Harding, CTF chair)

| Importance and Story about critical thinking | Importance and Story about critical thinking |
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| <p>Story</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“A STORY ABOUT A STUDENT”</p> <p>“There was a pupil who had no money to take the WASSCE Exam. I assisted in paying the examination fee . Unfortunately, the pupil did not make a good result in the examination. Discouraged, I advised the pupil to apply in one of the private schools around as a teacher, and also that the proceeds be saved his bank account. I also advised the pupil to apply for a distance learning which was delivered during the holiday period.</p> <p>With that critical thinking advice the pupil was able to acquire a Teacher Certificate in one of the reputable institutions in Sierra Leone. He is a presently acting head teacher”</p> <p>Participant from Freetown Teachers College Department of Mathematics and Commercial Studies (Economics)</p> | <p><i>“Importance of critical thinking</i></p> <p><i>Critical thinking is important because it makes learning becomes learners centred rather than teacher centred.</i></p> <p><i>Learning of students can be supported to improve critical thinking by equipping teachers with critical thinking application.”</i></p> <p>Story</p> <p><i>“I planted a tamarind (‘tombie’) tree which started growing rapidly. A friend of mine advised me to cut it down because it attracts evil spirits and will also promote conflicts in the home.</i></p> <p><i>As a scientist, I had to think critically and and finally refused to cut it down because I considered his belief as a myth and I have never realised any practical or scientific evidence about his story.”</i></p> <p>Participant from Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology <u>MUC</u></p> |
| <p>Story</p> <p><i>“I am a lecturer in the civil engineering department.</i></p> <p><i>During the first semester of the 2019/2020 academic year, three students met me in my office. They told me they wanted to go home and get their college fees but they needed transport fare. I responded to them to go and think about it critically as it as to how they could raise the need amount of money.</i></p> <p><i>They later came back happy the other day telling me that they how they met a building contractor who was going to contract them in about two days time.</i></p> <p><i>In about four days time, they informed me that they had secured the amount they needed as transport fare from the contract they had. I happily advised them to always think critically in every situation or circumstance they find themselves in order for them to make sound judgements”</i></p> | <p>Story</p> <p><i>“At the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology, Brookfields Campus, there was a need to assemble a commercial work table. Unfortunately, the manual to fix it up was written in Japanese and there was nobody who could read and interpret the default language of the manual. Seeing the frustration and desire to forget about the task, I suggested that we invite a chef whom I know could help in fixing the table. Together we were able to fix the table and all of us learned practical skills should there be such a situation in the future.”</i></p> <p>Importance</p> <p><i>“Hence, the development of critical thinking skills is so important for the students in my discipline in the following ways:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>It helps students to be innovators</i> ● <i>It helps students to be self-dependent</i> ● <i>It helps students become problem solvers</i> <p><i>The learning of my students could be supported so critical thinking could be improved by:</i></p> |

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| <p>Participant from Eastern Polytechnic, Kenema Faculty of Engineering and Innovation Building and Engineering Department</p> | <p>✓ Exposing them to practicals ✓ Giving them group work ✓ Giving them short time tests/quiz. ”</p> <p>Participant from Milton Margai College of Education and Technology</p> |
| <p>Importance <i>“Critical thinking skills is a problem solving strategy which helps an individual to change her/his mindset, get off an ugly situation and improve living conditions”</i></p> <p>Story <i>“This is a case study of a farmer who farms every year and at the end of the day is left with nothing. The farmer consumes everything, without even leaving reserve seeds to plant next, thereby causing famine and hunger during planting seasons.</i></p> <p><i>As a critical thinker, the farmer thought to himself, thinking out of the box, trying to bring up solutions that will help salvage the situation.</i></p> <p><i>First, the farmer consulted the entire family about his upcoming plans. He informed them that he would like to embark on an extensive farming that would help bring out a great harvest, cater for the family, sell some for financial income, and reserve some seeds for plough back periods.</i></p> <p><i>He engaged the two wives also to plant vegetable as a way of complimenting the rice farming. He laid up his plans very well, implemented them appropriately, and at the end of the day he succeeded by not only having enough produce but also turned out to be the Joseph type in the days of the Egyptian farming.”</i></p> <p>Participant from Milton Margai College of Education and Technology</p> | <p>Story <i>“Planning before action”</i> <i>“I asked my two children to withdraw the sum of Le250,000 to buy their school items before school reopens.</i></p> <p><i>Later on, I told the to bring the items they bought for themselves with the money.</i></p> <p><i>My son bought a pair of leather shoes at Le150,000, a pair of sneakers at Le100,000, which was equivalent to the total money given to him. The daughter brought a list of the items she got which includes a school bag at Le80,000, four yards of the material for her school uniform at Le40,000, pair of black shoes at Le80,000, a collection of undies at Le40,000, and a pair of socks at Le10,000 which again totals to the said amount given to her.</i></p> <p><i>From the story above, the daughter used critically thinking skills by preparing for her shopping which gave her a broader picture of what she has at hand (money) and what how to use it judiciously. While the son never planned and spent the money unjustifiably on only two items.</i></p> <p><i>Therefore, critical thinking helps one to analyse well before making judgements.”</i></p> <p><i>“in order to improve critical thinking in students, an individual must be encouraged to use her/his own knowledge on the situation at hand, do some analysis on it, thinking of the consequences whether positive or negative, and logically choose a certain course or alternative.</i></p> <p><i>Finally, critical thinking displays that there is a solution to every problem, be part of the change to the problem.”</i></p> <p>Participant from Milton Margai College of Education & Technology Home Economics Department</p> |

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| <p>Story</p> <p><i>“From the engineering point of view, critical thinking is very important.”</i></p> <p><i>“A contractor was given a job to construct a twin culvert in a swampy area in my village during the rainy season. The contractor being a strange man never knew I was an engineer.</i></p> <p><i>However, he won the contract and told the villagers, my people, that it was impossible to construct a culvert in the swamp during the rains.</i></p> <p><i>Among hundreds of people, I was the only one to disagree and make suggestions in a polite manner.</i></p> <p><i>I told him to first identify the point he want to construct the culvert and bring the surveyor to check for the expected length and depth of the culvert. That information will be taken to the design the culvert. Later block the section and remove all existing water. Diversion will be provided to continue the flow of traffic. Remove all the unstable materials and rock fill to maintain stability. You refill the area with approved borrow pit soil after rock-fill to certain level you can start your work-plan.</i></p> <p><i>He followed my suggestion and the work was done within two months in the rainy season.”</i></p> <p>Participant from Eastern Polytechnic, Kenema Civil engineering Department</p> | <p>Story</p> <p><i>“In my field of discipline as a science lecturer, teaching students in the area of practicals is very important, but we lack standard laboratories in our institution. So I wrote a letter to the school authorities with regards taking the students to another institution with a better laboratory.</i></p> <p><i>The school gave their approval. I also wrote the institution, Sierra Leone Standard Bureau an Radiation and Safety for permission to use their laboratories for the practicals. They equally gave their permission. We then carried out some of our practical sessions in their laboratories. This created the opportunity for the student to learn better in their field of studies”</i></p> <p>Participant from Milton Margai College of Education & Technology Integrated Science Department</p> |
| <p>Story</p> <p><i>“I once had an experience with my neighbour whose daughter was to enter a university, but during that period, the dad was ill and the space was not to be lost. I was contacted to render financial and moral assistance.</i></p> <p><i>The girl was desperate to enter university that particular year with only a little amount of money which could only pay a year’s fee.</i></p> <p><i>I however asked the mother to divide the available money into two equal halves, pay 50% of the fees and start a business with the rest which could raise profits with three to four months, which can later be used to continue paying the rest of the fees and other charges.”</i></p> | |

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