

Critical Thinking

Attributes of Creative Thought

April 2015

Critical thinking is a valued skill taught and learned by the professions, such as law, planning, medicine, engineering and architecture. The purpose of thinking critically is to examine a fact, a proposition or an idea from all perspectives to determine its veracity, its weak spots, its strengths, and ultimately, its usefulness. The antithesis of critical thinking is to accept information or ideas at face value and discard them before their true value can be exploited.

The following checklist is designed to probe the many aspects of critical, or creative thinking. The checklist anticipates that one person will be interviewed by another and rated by her or his capacity to engage various attributes to analyze an opportunity or problem.

Some of the attributes of critical thinking can be learned. Habits can be formed to always consider comparables or examples of other situations with similar characteristics that may provide instructive lessons for the current situation. Some attributes are more intuitive.

Perspective for problem solving involves looking at a situation from many directions. First is the evaluation of the physical evident. Second is an understanding of the policy or political system, spoken and silent, that surrounds the situation.

A third is appreciating the potential assistance from professions allied to your own. Invite others to help. The lone hero is ineffective in solving complex problems.

The Critical Thinking Community

Critical thinking...the awakening of the intellect to the study of itself.

Critical thinking is a rich concept that has been developing throughout the past 2,500 years. The term "critical thinking" has its roots in the mid-late 20th century. We offer here overlapping definitions, together which form a substantive, transdisciplinary conception of critical thinking.

Read more at:

<http://www.criticalthinking.org/>

The fourth aspect is the requirements of professionalism remembering that professions, such as city planning, have explicit requirements for conduct and problem solving based on an accepted theory of practice within a code of ethics.

Expansiveness of thought is essential. Discerning patters, recognizing voids and applying the learnings from a liberal arts education provide benefits. Knowing that everything is connected to everything else speeds resolution of issues.

Listening effectively is hard. Thoughts and ideas are conveyed by what is said, by what is not said and what is meant regardless of what is said. The ability to decipher messages from a plethora of communication noise comes with a refined ability to listen.

The following checklist is begins to define the elusive topic. Critical thinking about how to think critically is a start.

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CHECKLIST

Attributes Rating: Weak[1] to Strong[5]

Knowledge of Comparables

- a. Awareness and Understanding
- b. Applicability to Current Assignments

Professional: Skills and Applications

- a. Physical Planning and Design
- b. Policy Planning
- c. Professionalism

Expansiveness of Thought

- a. Implications of Spatial Context
- b. Connectivity of Diverse Ideas
- c. Functional Relationships
- d. Temporal Evaluations
- e. Systems Thinking
- f. Empathetic Capacity, Broad Perspective
- g. Worldly Viewpoint; Diverse Knowledge Base
- h. Multi-discipline Approach
- i. Extrapolate known Scenarios to Alternative Situations
- j. Derive Patterns from Analysis of Individual Data Points
- k. Interpret Complex Systems from Individual Components

Inclusiveness

- a. Team Building, Everyone Feels Involved
- b. Mission Buy-In, Everyone Feels Responsible
- c. Client Rapport, Candor w/ Tough Issues

Attributes Rating: Weak[1] to Strong[5]

Recognition of Opportunities to Solve Problems

- a. Ability to define and dissect Problems
- b. Ability to hear what is 'Not Said'
- c. Ability to read Body language [80%]
- d. Adapt Non-Traditional Solutions to Traditional Situations
- e. Connection of "Dots" to Form Patterns

Appreciation of Allied Professions

Physical

- a. Architecture
- b. Biology
- c. Civil Engineering
- d. Environmental Engineering
- e. Land Use and Real Estate Transaction Law
- f. Landscape Architecture
- g. Transportation Planning and Engineering
- h. Urban Design

Economic

- a. Financial, Economic and Market Analysis
- b. Public Administration; The Civic Process

Social

- a. Social Sciences
- b. History, Archaeology and Anthropology

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