

Critical Thinking

Being a critical thinker was a student learning objective when I was in high school. Back then, I was very confused with what it meant to be a critical thinker. I thought it meant thinking about thinking, but I was not sure how to think about thinking. Teachers would tell students to be a critical thinker by making sure we are doing things correctly and really questioning if what we are doing is making sense. Throughout my higher education, I have seen how my critical thinking skills have developed.

Many lectures and assignments throughout my experience in the child development program have helped me understand critical thinking. Learning about theories has helped me understand the field, but understanding how the theories work and how they were created is a skill within critical thinking. Being able to justify where the theory originated and being able to logically put steps together are part of my critical thinking skills. An example would be Piaget's Development of Cognition Theory. I have been taught the stages in several classes. In introduction courses, I learned the stages and memorized them for tests. It was not until my Learning in the Young Child course where I was able to apply logical reasoning to the steps. Children will not be able to think abstractly until they can represent objects in their mind without actually seeing them in person. Breaking apart theories and giving concrete examples of them has helped me develop my critical thinking skills. Having a solid understanding of theories has also helped me develop a curriculum for young children.

Instead of setting paint on a table and expecting to teach a child about mixing colors, I am able to follow a theoretical-based method for teaching. Observing, planning, implementing, and reflecting are the key steps to creating a curriculum. As I am observing, I am able to view the classroom as a whole, and I am able to determine the different developmental levels of children.

Nicole Angeles
(408) 406-5574
n.angeles25@yahoo.com

From there, I can determine what domains need work. By using activities, families, interactions, routines and the environment, I am able to create a well-developed, theoretical-based curriculum. After implementing the curriculum and letting children experience the new activities in the classroom, I can reflect on the progress made.

Going through steps and understanding the importance of them is part of critical thinking. If curriculum planning did not exist, then results of preschool classrooms would not measure up the same way they do today. The best practices have been determined based on research and evidence. Research and evidence are significant aspects of critical thinking. When my high school teachers told me to do things correctly, I think they meant to make sure information had evidence and that it was credible. Most information is useless unless it is backed up with research.

During my higher education I have learned how to search for research articles that are credible. By using California State University, Chico's online library, I am able to check certain boxes and set certain criteria on my search. These things include the year published, type of document, and availability. The online library easily organizes credible sources, but when I search on the public web, I need to do more work. Checking the year a document was published is important because current information is more accurate. The type of document is also important because peer-reviewed papers have been edited by professionals or scientists. Opinion pieces and newspapers are not peer-reviewed and are typically filled with biases.

As a member of the child development profession, I can offer strong critical thinking skills to the field. My higher education has prepared me for scientific methods of thinking, planning and implementing curriculum and searching for credible sources. The only thing I can improve on in this area is having more real life experience applying my critical thinking skills.

Nicole Angeles
(408) 406-5574
n.angeles25@yahoo.com

In my higher education, many scenarios were presented to me in which I used empirical reasoning, but I could improve on real situations that require critical thinking in the field.

In my Child Development Practice: Children and Families course, I am writing a literature review on Common Core standards. By committing to a literature review, I know I am going to apply many critical thinking skills. My first step in writing the review is finding multiple sources of information to include in my paper. I search key terms that I was focusing on, and I searched within the credible criteria. After reading the abstract of two articles, I was able to determine the usefulness in my paper and their credibility.

In my Learning in the Young Child course, I wrote an observation paper. This paper was based on seven observations of seven different social activities in a public area. I recorded the number of boys and girls at each social activity. I wrote about observations aligning with social theories while using empirical evidence. I also wrote possible ideas for observations that did not align with social theories. The second part of my paper was more difficult because I really had to tap into my critical thinking skills to answer why some behaviors went against the empirical theories.