



Abstract

Critical Thinking (CT) is a major asset for graduates’ employability and successful integration in society. However, and for different reasons, universities may be underestimating its importance. Efforts should focus on the development and daily practice of CT, and on the strategic role of academic leaders in providing policy and support to promote CT education as part of the organizational culture - driving institutional change by quality standards, pedagogical models and practices. We present the Critical Thinking across the European Higher Education Curricula (CRITHINKEDU) project, which arises from the ongoing concern of universities, business corporations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) to improve the quality of CT education across different disciplines, according to labor market needs and social challenges. CRITHINKEDU will create an opportunity to foster dialogue among relevant actors in a joint industry-university forum, and the consortium will work as a network to promote CT education around Europe.



CRITHINKEDU:
the “Critical Thinking across the European Higher Education Curricula” project overview

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Context

Employers frequently complain about existing gaps between the competency profiles’ of graduates and the workplace needs [1], and future education efforts need to focus on the development and daily practice of Critical Thinking (CT) (Figure 1.). Nevertheless, the opportunities to develop CT are generally scarce and undervalued within universities standardized curricula – which keeps stressing the memorization, retrieval and the passive transfer of knowledge. Also, the offer of CT generalist semiannual courses may not be sufficient to bridge existing gaps, and the gains of a large proportion of students in CT are either exceedingly small or empirically nonexistent [2]. Moreover, research reinforces the need for good empirically investigated instructional approaches [3], increasing teacher training and professional development. This is not only because CT is a concept difficult to define [4], but also because lecturers don’t know how to teach it or how effective their approach is in their specific course.

Top 10 skills

in 2020	in 2015
1. Complex Problem Solving	1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Critical Thinking	2. Coordinating with Others
3. Creativity	3. People Management
4. People Management	4. Critical Thinking
5. Coordinating with Others	5. Negotiation
6. Emotional Intelligence	6. Quality Control
7. Judgment and Decision Making	7. Service Orientation
8. Service Orientation	8. Judgment and Decision Making
9. Negotiation	9. Active Listening
10. Cognitive Flexibility	10. Creativity

Fig. 1 – The Future of Jobs Report (WEF, 2016)

Objectives

- Align CT learning outcomes with the current labor market and society challenges ;
- Propose guidelines on instructional approaches to CT across Higher Education Institutions (HEI);
- Deliver a set of recommendations and educational strategies for teaching CT;
- Propose quality assurance criteria for CT education in universities across different disciplines;
- Create a European network to share best practices and research on CT education.

Activities and Outputs

- European collection of CT skills needed in different professional sectors (Figure 2.);
- European review of the different CT educational practices developed by the HEI;
- Training course on CT education for professional development of teachers and trainers;
- Proposal of European guidelines for quality assurance criteria in CT education across HEI;
- “The European Day for CT education”;
- “The European Meeting on CT education for 21st century challenges”;
- Special Issue on “CT education in HEI curricula for 21st century challenges”.



Fig. 2 – Focus group interviews with companies and NGO from different professional sectors (2017)

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