Purpose Of Critical Thinking In Higher Education

What is Critical Thinking? How important is it in today's higher education system? These are very frequently asked questions. Floods of false and incorrect information are increasing in parallel with the rise of the influence of the internet. This affects the overall quality of students' work. Many of them tend to study without any primal selection of the information, do not separate main facts from irrelevant information, and lack any internal motivation for thinking. Therefore, the ability to think critically becomes essential today. Not only is it one of the most important factors for successful learning, it is also a prerequisite for the development of a mature, independent personality, which would be able to adapt to a wide range of social circumstances in the future.

Critical thinking is the fundamental ability to examine information. The term has its inventor - the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates. He noted that people are reluctant to check information if it is presented by someone who presents himself as an expert or authority. Socrates began to test the ideas expressed by authority: asking deep questions, demanding evidence, checking how authority perceives various concepts. This way he could see if the interlocutor's information was clear and reasoned. Most of the time, following these procedures, it became clear that people are not experts - they have little knowledge and simply rephrase other people's opinions. In other words, their information is unreliable. Like Socrates, we use critical thinking to understand and objectively evaluate information. Therefore, such thinking requires carefulness and precision.

The school still does not prepare students for critical thinking. The pattern of lessons is that children need to hear, absorb and replicate the knowledge in situations that do not require creative or adaptive thinking. In the article "Take note as another learning discipline slides away" Tara Brabazon states that there is no point for students to twist their minds when everything said in class is uploaded to the virtual learning environment and printed out for the students to revise anyway. And here I am not just talking about learning mathematical formulas and solving problems. Even in literary subjects, one has to learn the traits of an author's creative work and then apply them while reading some poem or prose piece. Those new students who went beyond the revision standard at school really succeed. Those who have attended sports, art clubs, academies for young scientists, participated in youth political organizations have a different perception of teamwork, leadership, public speaking, their level of curiosity, self-confidence and initiative is different.

In the past, it seemed to be enough for a person to be a professional, have a good education and knowledge to succeed. But how is it possible to be a good journalist, business consultant, or data analyst without critical thinking? Or how can it be possible to do some work if you are in conflict with the team and are unable to plan your time? According to a lecturer at Vilnius University Institute of International Relations and Political Sciences dr. Vilnius Bartninkas, when we work, we use two tools. The first is the specialized knowledge that we have acquired while studying at school, building up work experience. The second is all of the remaining competencies upon which success in our work depends: teamwork skills, communication skills, time management, stress management, discipline, adaptability to change, motivation, creativity, and many more skills. These skills are crucial to succeed in this fast-changing society.

You can't always believe in the things you hear and see. Can't be convinced that a person presenting himself as an expert always speaks the truth. Even Socrates taught us to question and check the information, which can be learned through study. Higher education tries to develop skills and critical thinking which was not properly taught in school. Skills that are not about the profession but about the ability to seek answers to emerging questions and solve problems today - while studying and in the future - when entering the work market.