Thought Is Power

Vaibhavi Gawarikar[1], Dr. P.V Xavier[2]

[1]*Research Scholar-Navrachana University.*
[2]*Associate Professor-Navrachana University*
Corresponding Author: Vaibhavi Gawarikar

ABSTRACT: It is usually said and believed that knowledge is power. I rephrase the phrase, 'Knowledge is Power' to 'Thought is Power'. Thought can be rightly treated to make information accumulated by the mind be processed in the accurate way to become knowledge i.e. using thought to make sense of the information and applying itright in various contexts and situations. Thought if disciplined and consciously controlled can give tremendously relevant and accurate decisions and outcomes. Unregulated thinking leads to unorganized actions, decisions and outcomes. The paper highlights the process of thinking that can happen at various levels. It also attempts to suggest the ways to bring Critical thinking at school and university level.
Key words: Critical Thinking; Reflection; Emotional triggers; Prejudices; Disciplined thinking; Conscious; Evaluate; Accommodate

---

I. INTRODUCTION

I always wonder why people are what they are.

When I go out for a walk I see people smoking, smoking may be 3 cigarettes in a while. When I am driving I see people driving recklessly around me, not even noticing how close it would have been to a bad accident that just got avoided for some reason, I see people talking about stress in parks, I see people quite obese still not able to do anything about it as they can't come out of routine and work out for themselves, I can see people being indifferent when quarrels are happening on the street, I also notice some students quite particular and punctual for what they do while some just want to let it go and pass out without thinking about the implications that this kind of attitude would have on their career. I can see people taunting, being jealous, some hardworking, some very honest and so on…..

With these few things that I can think about while thinking about the talk to deliver, I think about what must be going on in their minds that these things like smoking and stress happen and we see what they are. Why people are having stress? Why people are not able to think through the implications of the actions? Why don't they look into their health? Why do they binge? Turning down to the student why students indulge into superficial knowledge? Why are we indifferent to various issues around us?

I guess we are facing very colossal questions from the above discussion
1)   Which problem is evident from the above cases?
2)   What can be done to change the above scene?
3)   Why does it even exist?
4)   Why some are quite guided and why are some unguided?
5)   Do they require counselling sessions?
6)   Will they be able to change the scene by themselves?

What can be done to solve these problems that are created by themselves and no one else? I would like to elaborate on this further:

Thinking about a situation that is not working out, feeling bad about it and wanting to cling on to something that is not going to affect in a positive way points to problem in thinking process. I think what is evident from the above case is some could direct their thought process in the right direction while some could not. I think the most powerful thing in and around us is the thought process that we have cultivated in our life. Right from the childhood the process gets a direction. Childhood and growing up happens in our home and schools. Then:

•   Have we trained our mind for disciplined thinking? Have we received any formal training just like any other courses to train our thinking process?

•   Are we equipped enough to think through the implications of the actions?

The thought process or thinking doesn't happen in vacuum but happens based on experiences, beliefs and interests of a person. The experiences that a person collects from his/ her school and home become a base to

---

think and act in a particular way. Most of us don't even know that there is a problem in our thinking process. Naturally there is no explicit instruction in the school as to how to guide this thinking process. The schools/educational institutions give everything but critical thinking. Most of us didn't even know what thought was when we were in schools and how it can rightly processed to make us what we are. It was quite undirected, unconscious and unorganized. This has to be channelized into right manner to thinking that happens consciously and deeply. Critical thinking has to be cultivated into the minds of students so that we can have better and healthier citizens. I very confidently think that critical thinking can be taken up in schools to explicitly practice it out. The students should be taught to analyse their thinking process, assess their thinking process and improve upon it. This is one way by which we will be able to open many other ways. Be it content expertise, academic excellence, professional conduct, values, ethics, creativity, problem solving and so on.

Question arises as to what is critical thinking?

Critical thinking

"Critical", the word in itself has a negative connotation. But has a positive significance. I think Criticalthinking as the examining one's own thinking. Examining and assessing to improve are fiery words. How to examine our thoughts sounds quite scary. I guess these words have always been used for testing various course items. But this examining oneself is only a way out to get our thoughts a structure.

Question is how?

How question has to be answered. Imaginations and ideas may be big but bringing it down to the level of
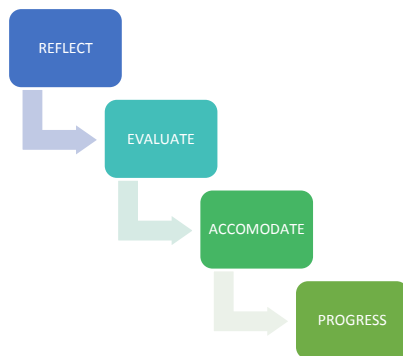
applicability is different. Critical thinking process can be done based on the above levels

1) One good tool to think critically about oneself I have found in these many years and which can work at various levels is 'Reflection'. To reflect upon one's thinking process with intellectual integrity is most important. No one can best judge you its only "you" who can analyse yourself. One must know and reflect upon his likes, dislikes, emotional triggers, way of thinking, way of learning, prejudices, biases etc. One should be aware of one's thought process right from childhood. The child has to know what his beliefs are, what his interests are, how selfishly we think about everything and how one is guided with Sociocentric tendencies. This examining of thoughts requires several tools to do it. So reflecting can happen at two levels: first can happen at reasoning level that will develop academic excellence and reasoning abilities. The other aspect on which reflections can happen is at the character level.

1A)To develop character, the intellectual traits like intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual integrity, intellectual perseverance, confidence in reason should be should be taken regularly and consciously. I do not think we have any tool in educational institutions that will guide one for developing character. These traits can be understood at depth to develop character.

I have seen in my teaching experience that students are able to relate to traits very well. Why? They face lot of problems relating to putting forth their viewpoints, understanding different perspectives that other students have towards things, analysing and interpreting pool of information they have in front of them, reasoning and logic, standing up for the right things and expecting one's own behaviour to the same standards as they expect their peers/friends to have. I have seen dramatic improvement in character traits of my students with these traits. They were able to give out their weaknesses without any hesitation and wanted to improve. At this point also they come and tell the truth rather than lie. I think that's a big achievement in the sense, academically they improve by way of this because they honestly declare their ignorance and persevere into understanding the content. These traits will be important in terms of making better societies as well as students.

1B)On the other hand reasoning abilities can be well developed by asking correct questions into the class itself. The students are able to connect their understanding with questions. I have seen students giving instant replies for factual questions but when you questions based on how and why the hand go down to few who want to attempt those questions. I intensely feel that these questioning based classes will replace didactic teaching. One can surely put one question of the content on the board and that can be discussed upon. The class can begin with the questioning as a tool for helping students think through the content. This will help students to

put the views accurately as they would require information, data and evidence to reason out with the answers they give to the teacher. This will also refine their understanding of the ignorance of the content they might have. They will also consider several opinions while going through the process. So in a way the reasoning abilities will be developed to certain extent.

Questions that can be put forward may be in classrooms

1) Why are we discussing this issue?
2) Do you think this is a significant issue to be discussed?
3) If significant, what information gives out that it's significant?
4) What can be the implications of this issue or this kind of thinking?
5) What have we assumed in this discussion?

This discussion may help students to come out with their beliefs, their information, data that may be inaccurate or accurate, their biases, assumptions they might have made… and so on. They finally understand that there are many things involved into putting an accurate viewpoint.

Habitual and conscious use of this will help us to think and dig deep into our thought processes. Students have to be asked to use this process for any major decisions they think have to be taken in their life.

This thinking has to be rigorous and has to be somewhere explicitly taken up in educational institutions.

2)After the process of reflecting, assessing the reflections is very important. Whatever is happening at the character level and reasoning level has to be assessed with clarity, accuracy, relevancy, depth, breadth and logicalness of the reflections

3)This assessment will be followed up by accommodation. Changes required in the thinking process after the assessment saying that thinking must be like this in such situation should be accommodated and with this we can see improvement in us and can progress in thinking

This will help them out to be self-directed, self-controlled and they will have discipline that is self-inflicted. This can be attained through

- Critical thinking that can be explicitly taught to students from school days.
- It should be made part of curriculum that runs spirally right from pre-primary till university level
- Inquiry and questioning methods should be part of everyday classroom practices. Questioning about their understanding of the concepts will improve upon their academic excellence.
- The model that is used to develop critical thinking must be comprehensive model that integrates the dimension of philosophy into it.

How can this be taken forward? Here are few suggestions.

At School Level:

- Students should be asked to maintain their personal diaries that can have journal entries that are posted by them daily or weekly. These entries should be based on their weekly reflections about the happening during the week. These will be the first step of reflection. Students reflect every aspect that did not go right in their diaries and even the right ones. Elaboration on why right and why wrong has to be stated.
- The format of the entries may be:

What did they like about the week and why they liked?
What didthey not like and why they didn't?
What would they want to improve upon as the week progressed?
What they analysed in terms of thinking that happened as students, or as friends, as peers; different roles that they take up during the week.

- Every week, one day of the week can be completely devoted to talk upon their analysis of their thinking process and the entries that have been made. They can be questioned about why they assumed such information or why they think the things went bad.

At University level:

- Students can be asked to do assignments that talk about analysing problems in particular subject or analysing particular concepts with the help of ideas like purpose, information, questions, inferences, assumptions, concepts and ideas. This can prove to be very important to bring in the information that the subject considers, the inferences the subject comes at, the concepts and ideas the subject uses or the assumption it considers
- Classroom practices must focus on questions as: How do I know this? What is this based upon? What does this imply and presuppose? What explains this, connects to it, leads from it? How am I viewing it? Should I view it differently? Is it accurate information? Have I assumed something here? [1]

- A culture of creating critical thinkers will help to build the momentum that is required for this movement to take rapidity
- Intellectual traits should be introduced at an earlier stage as they will cultivate personality required to be fair-minded thinkers. These thinkers will be loved and respected across all domains of life
- Continuous theoretical understanding of traits of mind like intellectual humility, intellectual integrity, intellectual courage, intellectual autonomy, confidence in reason will help them to apply in settings
- Conducting activities and showing movies, stories, games that have these traits aligned somewhere must be explicitly shown and discussed

II. CONCLUSION

Critical Thinking is taken up in a very episodic and superficial way. What seems is the long way to go ahead with the actual way of taking it up. That will require continuous, untiring and conscious efforts from everyone. Be it students, teachers, parents, administration, management. It's high time that it should be made part of curriculum like any other subject and explicitly taught to students.

REFERENCES

[1]. Paul, R.; Elder, E. (2016).*The art of Socratic questioning*. Foundation for Critical Thinking Press