

***Conceptualising and developing critical  
thinking in and beyond the academy:  
International student perspectives***

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ANDREW DRYBROUGH

PHD CANDIDATE (UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH)

# Critical thinking (CT): essential in higher education?

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**“Liberal education leads us away from naïve acceptance of authority, above self-defeating relativism, and beyond ambiguous contextualism. It culminates in principled reflective judgement. Learning critical thinking, cultivating the critical spirit, is not a means to an end, it is part of the goal itself.”**

(Facione, 2015, p.24)

# Outline

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Do you think that during your time studying your masters you have changed in your view of critical thinking? How?

*1 – Methodology*

*2 – Conceptualisation of CT*

*3 – Perception of development of CT in a masters*

*4 – CT beyond their masters?*

*5 – Caveats*

*6 – Pedagogical implications*

# ***1 – Methodology***

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4 focus groups (FG)

13 individual interviews (4 follow-up from FG)

20 international students (non-UK)

12 different nationalities

8 mainland Chinese

## ***2 – Conceptualisation of CT***

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CT means different things to different people (Davies and Barnett, 2015, p.3)

### **3 major themes**

- \* Reading widely and engaging in literature
- \* Comparing, contrasting and evaluating different viewpoints and perspectives
- \* Deciding on your own view and making a judgement based on reasoned evaluation

## ***3 – Perception of development of CT in a masters***

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How had their CT skills developed based on this conceptualisation of CT?

Baseline:

**A = Stronger prior awareness of CT (2)**

**B = Mild awareness of CT (8)**

**C = Weak or 'no' awareness of CT (10)**

## *Awareness of CT based on ...?*

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*Less on national educational background*

*More on the subject(s) studied at UG*

**A: Law, philosophy, psychology**

**B: History, Translation, Culture, Tourism**

**C: English Language and literature, Science**

## ***Perceived progress in a one year masters***

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- 1) Some progress from high level **(A)**
- 2) A lot of progress from low level **(B/C)**
- 3) Very little progress/still confused **(C)**



## ***Examples***

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**1) I don't think it's changed, but I think it has, it has developed quite a lot (Nia)**

**2) When I first came here ... the first time that I heard two words together 'critical thinking' was here, was in the first day I came here, I didn't know what ... was that and so my improvement was like, I mean it's massive. (Marco)**

**3) The subject knowledge is far more better than the critical thinking for me. ... I'm still looking for the opportunity to be pointed out ... clearly [the] idea of critical thinking. (Henry)**

## ***4 - CT beyond their masters?***

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**1) Would have to adapt (tone down) what they have learned about CT to new (returning) environment**

**2) Crucial and new understanding that they would like to apply in future**

## ***Examples***

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**1) I: But when you go back to the Indonesian context?**

**Ana: I should make adjustment. I cannot use totally British paradigm. I mean, I mean ... Here is Socratic education? I don't know. In Asia it's a bit top down.**

**2) It's absolutely beyond that, and I think ...once you learn how to be critical about everything that surrounds you, you get to a level of understanding and I think that you may take care about people around you better just because you ... are more able to understand what's going on around you ... and I think that being critical is something that everyone should learn. (Marie)**

## **5 – Caveats**

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**Not a measurement of CT skills development *per se*.**

**Who I did not interview.**

**Those that struggle to get by.**

## ***6 – Pedagogical implications***

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**Assume students know nothing about CT at the beginning**

**Teach students the basic CT reading & writing skills**

**Feedback that is specific & individualised**

**Not just about passing the next assignment**

**CT has value beyond graduation**

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# Thank you for listening!

[Andrew.Drybrough@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Andrew.Drybrough@ed.ac.uk)

# Reference

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Davies, M. and Barnett, R., 2015. Introduction. In: M. Davies and R. Barnett, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Thinking in Higher Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-25

Facione, P. A. 2015. *Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts?* [pdf] Available at:<<https://www.insightassessment.com/Resources/Importance-of-Critical-Thinking/Critical-Thinking-What-It-Is-and-Why-It-Counts/Critical-Thinking-What-It-Is-and-Why-It-Counts-PDF>> [Accessed 21 July 2017]