

RESEARCH ARTICLE



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## THINKING SKILLS: A CRITICAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

The progress of a nation is dependent on the utilization of human resource. Developed-human mind therefore plays a very momentous role in the path of progress. To produce such mind is a big challenge before the Nation. A significant amount of research has been undertaken by many agencies on How to develop qualitative human mind by developing their 'thinking skills'. This paper purports to show the requirement of cognitive development among the young generation of our time. It further depicts the categories of human mind and the nurturing of all such minds in many different ways. It has also been felt that the intervention of 'thinking skills' in school, college and Universities' curriculum is a necessity. Indeed, this paper will help understanding the dynamics of 'thinking skills' and its varied facets.

**Key Words:** momentous, significant, purports, cognitive, depicts, dynamics, primordial, faculty, enhance, benefits

### INTRODUCTION

Human mind is sharper than super computer. It would not be improper if we call it 'think tank'. The sphere of mind is larger than the sky and wider than the ocean. The flight of mind is faster than the flash of light and often slower than the movement of a snail, depending on its engagement. Improving the quality of thinking has been a central aim of education. It is estimated that we have about 60,000 thoughts on average each day. Therefore nurturing human mind is a critical affair which needs proper attention. Thinking is a primordial activity that the mind performs since its very origin. A kid, for example, exercises his/her mental faculty and starts thinking to sense something and to act something upon it. Indeed, scientists believe that exercising human brain can create a 'cognitive reserve' that

helps sharpening human mind. Human mind consists of five main cognitive functions:

- Memory
- Attention
- Language
- Visual skills
- Executive functions

These cognitive functions work efficiently and effectively to enable an individual to undertake right action at right time. However, a few questions need to be answered so as to understand thinking skill and its growth.

- What type of thinking do we want to enhance?
- What are the processes of developing thinking skills?
- What are the benefits of garnering thinking skills?

The various types of thinking strike our minds in order to sense, understand, create, resolve issues, etc. They are:

- Searching for meaning
- Critical thinking
- Creative thinking
- Decision making
- Problem solving

Indeed, a skill is generally defined as the practical ability to do something well. The way people engage and exercise their mental acumen in creativity and solving problems are called thinking skills. Learning without thinking is futile. Thinking skills are not readymade products existing in some corner of the mind. These are all shaped and initiated by the mind as per the requirement. Thinking skills refer to the human capacity to think in conscious ways to achieve certain purposes. Such processes include remembering, questioning, visualizing concepts, executing planning, reasoning, imagining, solving problems, making decisions and judgments, translating thoughts into words and so on. We can learn how to think more effectively in lots of different ways and can apply these skills in different situations in different times.

A significant amount of research work has been undertaken by the researchers on thinking and learning skills. Interrogations such as how the brain works? How people learn and how teaching approaches can help improve children's ability to think and learn? have been made from time to time. Complete answers of these questions still remain unanswered. However, 'Thinking skills' is a term often used to refer to the many capacities involved in thinking and learning. These skills are seen as fundamental to lifelong learning, active citizenship and emotional intelligence. Research shows that thinking is developed through cognitive challenge, and opportunities for collaborative work and metacognitive discussion. Successful approaches to teaching thinking include cognitive acceleration, brain-based and philosophical approaches. These and other teaching strategies can help raise standards of achievement and create thinking children, thinking classrooms and thinking institutions. Our education system focuses on imparting information-based knowledge to the

learners rather than determining the urgency of developing thinking skills. In recent years, the thinking skills movement has been given importance. The capacity to think is imperative both in learning and in life. Corporate houses have been spending time, energy and money to develop thinking skills among the employees. Some specific thinking tools such as 'mind mapping test', 'thinking skills assessment test' are conducted by the registered trainers to prepare a grounding against which thinking skills modules can be designed. Indeed, Carol McGuinness describes thinking skills as the capacity to absorb information, analyse, draw conclusions, brainstorm, solve problems, evaluate alternatives, plan, make decisions and reflect upon them. Thus thinking skills movement is based on a number of key assumptions not only about learning, but also about the nature of intelligence.

#### **Why are thinking skills important?**

The world is moving incredibly fast. Information is expanding in such a speed that individuals require transferable skills to enable them to address different problems in different contexts at different times throughout their lives. Thinking skills are important because mastery of the 'basics' in education (literature, mathematics, science, technology, etc.) however well taught, are not sufficient to fulfill human potential. Countries across the globe feel the necessity of a broad range of competencies among the children for a challenging future. Therefore the 'higher order' thinking skills are required, in addition to the basic skills, because individuals cannot 'store' and retrieve sufficient knowledge in their memories for future use. The complexity of modern jobs requires people who can comprehend, judge and participate in generating new knowledge and processes. Thus assimilating information from multiple sources, determining its truth and use it to make sound judgments are the call of the hour.

People should understand the importance of enhancing thinking skills. Awareness of the same is therefore required. A quality thinking mind is highly needed for our growth and development process. Corporate houses, business agencies and all public and private institutions need such minds that can produce the best of the bests. As Paul, puts it: 'We

need to think better if we are going to become better people.'

#### **How Thinking Skills can be developed?**

The human mind is made up of many faculties or capacities that enable learning to take place. The significant volume of research and publications relating to thinking skills is largely in response to a belief that learning is a consequence of thinking. To make the mental faculties healthy and to activate the thinking process one has to penetrate into the grooming aspect of the mind. This growth of mind normally happens in childhood. But it never ceases even in old age. It is an ever flowing and never ending process. Collaborative learning also helps nurturing the thinking skills as it provides an opportunity to the thinker to think varied aspects of a matter from various angles. Indeed, exercise of mind is highly required in decision making process. Further the educational institutions should place more emphasis on developing the mental processes that grow our capacity to learn, than on the direct teaching of tools or techniques that promote effective thinking.

#### **Identification and Application of Thinking Skills**

A close study delineates that the students engage their mind in activities like information processing, reasoning, enquiry, creative thinking, evaluation, problem solving, etc.

#### **Information processing**

- Collecting information
- Organizing information in proper order
- Disseminating information

#### **Reasoning**

- Finding explanation on a certain matter
- Logicality of the matter
- Establish a strong point of view

#### **Enquiry**

- Asking questions of verity to get the answer
- Psychic investigation

#### **Creative thinking**

- Conceiving ideas/ideation
- Imagining and encoding conceived ideas
- Processing ideas to get solution

#### **Evaluation**

- Preparation of scheme of evaluation
- Proper evaluation on the basis of scheme

- Examining the authenticity and appropriateness of ideas and information applied in evaluation process

#### **Problem Solving**

- Searching the source of the problem
- Examining the degree and gravity of the problem
- Solving problems step by step

#### **Ideas that fortify thinking skill**

- Human Intelligence is dynamic not static.
- Exercised brain is like stainless still but unexercised brain is like stained iron.
- The qualitative use of human potential is nothing but the development of thinking skills.
- Most brains are underused and are capable of further development.
- Learning is a consequence of thinking. We learn best when we make sense of what we are learning and relate it to what we already know.
- Basic thinking skills can be developed at the rudimentary stage of learning and the higher order thinking skill can be developed at maturity.
- Enhanced thinking skills will transfer across a range of subjects and learning contexts.

#### **Thinking Society, a Successful Society**

Professor Howard Gardner in his latest book, 'Five Minds for the Future', defines the cognitive abilities that will command a premium in the 21st century, and therefore, are important to cultivate in our young people:

- the disciplinary mind - mastery of major schools of thought (including science, mathematics, and history) and of at least one professional craft
- the synthesizing mind - ability to integrate ideas from different disciplines or spheres into a coherent whole and to communicate that integration to others
- the creating mind - capacity to uncover and clarify new problems, questions, and phenomena
- the respectful mind - awareness of and appreciation for differences among human beings and human groups
- the ethical mind - fulfillment of one's responsibilities as a worker and citizen.

**CONCLUSION**

Fisher is of the view that a successful society will be a thinking society. On leaving school, young people will become citizens in a complex and constantly changing world. They must be lifelong learners and have the ability to think for themselves. Being able to think effectively gives them a deeper understanding of the ideas and issues that affect their lives and helps them to make effective choices and decisions. As thinking skills development has become essential these days for societal progress a thinking skills movement has to lead by the generation of our time.

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