



## Developing student's critical thinking through political education teaching

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### Abstract

Critical thinking is a term that is no longer unfamiliar to Vietnamese education in the current integration trend. This is the foundation for the development of other methods and skills to help learners adapt and solve problems that arise in the colorful and colorful reality of life. However, the inclusion of critical thinking as an independent subject in the national education system or integrated into the teaching process, especially higher education, has not been given adequate attention. Therefore, integrating training and developing critical thinking for students through teaching political education, the foundation of critical thinking is a necessary and meaningful job, positively contributing to their career reform fundamentally, comprehensively education and training.

**Keywords:** thinking, critical, political, teaching

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### 1. Introduction

In the training document on Life Skills of World Vision Vietnam, the authors have defined critical thinking as follows: "Critical thinking is a dialectical thinking process including analysis and evaluate an existing information from other perspectives to the problem posed in order to clarify and re-affirm the accuracy of the problem. Critical arguments must be clear, logical, full of evidence, meticulous and fair. It can be said that the above definition has fully and clearly highlighted the content of the concept of "critical thinking". The definition that has further stimulated our perception of critical thinking and the practice of critical thinking is in fact "thinking critically, analyzing, evaluating, understanding information, and positive skepticism (if any) from which to argue and prove the argument with verified information to come up with a convincing final conclusion, consistent with reality and logical laws to solve the problem solve problems"

Vietnam is in the period of accelerating industrialization, modernization and international integration. That poses an urgent requirement for Vietnamese education, especially higher education, to train people with practical capabilities to meet the requirements of human resource development for the country. That has been confirmed in Resolution 29, the Eighth Conference of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, term XI on fundamental and comprehensive renovation of education and training, emphasizing: strengthen and synchronize the basic elements of education and training in the direction of attaching importance to developing learners' qualities and capacities"[1, p. 127]. Some core competencies can be mentioned such as: self-study ability, problem-solving ability, cooperation capacity, critical thinking, communication ability... In which, critical thinking (or competency) critical thinking) - a dialectical thinking process - has become a common and necessary "keyword" in the field of education in Vietnam today. However, it is a fact that most Vietnamese students rarely give academic criticism. As a result, students often fall into a state of passive learning, leading to low learning efficiency. This significantly affects the quality of education of the school in general and the quality of teaching political education subjects in particular.

Meanwhile, the basic task of the general education subjects, first of all, the "Political Education" module is to equip learners with a scientific worldview, a revolutionary outlook on life and a materialistic dialectical methodology. This is the fundamental basis of the formation and development of critical thinking for students. Stemming from the above reasons, the article would like to give some opinions and propose some measures to develop pedagogical thinking for students through the teaching of the "Political Education" module. From there, the author hopes to make a positive contribution to the fundamental and comprehensive renovation of education in the current conditions.

## 2. Critical thinking of students in education today

### 2.1. Critical thinking and the role of critical thinking

From analyzing the definitions of critical thinking, thereby clarifying the content of the concept of critical thinking and pointing out the characteristics and requirements of critical thinkers, we initially put forward a definition of critical thinking. The definition of critical thinking skills is as follows: Critical thinking skill is the ability to apply knowledge and experience to identify, analyze, reason and evaluate a certain problem based on intellectual standards wisdom before reaching a conclusion or decision to effectively solve the problem posed.

The criteria of intelligence as an important sign in the content of the concept of critical thinking skills are understood as: clarity, correctness, accuracy, relevance, logic, meaningfulness, depth, breadth, and fairness. People with critical thinking skills will apply those intellectual standards when performing skill operations, including: Identifying and analyzing problems, inferring and evaluating information related to the problem, problem solving. [2, p.89].

The core specific skills of critical thinking are: always asking the question "is it true"; observation skills; know how to collect information, evidence and arguments to re-examine all issues; explain the problem; identify the causes, consequences and consequences of the problem; unwavering personal values.

Critical thinking is a dialectical thinking process that involves analyzing and evaluating existing information from other perspectives for a given problem in order to clarify and confirm the accuracy of the problem. Critical arguments must be clear, logical, full of evidence, meticulous and fair. Critical thinking is associated with two main skills: reasoning skills and problem solving skills [2, p. 25-27).

People with analytical thinking skills often have basic abilities such as: observing, formulating problems (questions, arguments), detecting contradictions and common mistakes in arguments; and recognize the logical connection and connection between ideas to solve problems in a systematic way. It should be noted that critical thinking is not the accumulation of information and memory. Just because a person has a good memory and a lot of knowledge does not mean that he or she has critical thinking. A person with a critical thinking is someone who knows how to use information to solve problems and find additional relevant resources that are useful.

It is also important to distinguish critical thinking from arguing or criticizing the arguments of others. Critical thinking (or critical thinking) is constructive skepticism (constructive skepticism), it helps the subject gain more knowledge and promotes arguments to reach the realization of the truth. Therefore, critical thinking has the task of pointing out common shortcomings in the thinking process and providing explanations for a possible optimal choice. Therefore, people with critical thinking often have the ability to improvise and quickly solve new problems; and from there, they are often able to take control of their lives.

We can see the similarity between the effectiveness of critical thinking and the goal of fundamental and comprehensive reform of education and training in Vietnam today, including higher education: "Focusing on training creating highly qualified human resources, fostering talents, developing the quality and capacity of learners for self-study, self-enrichment of knowledge and creativity." [3]. We can list some main benefits that this type of thinking brings to

Vietnamese students today such as: critical thinking helps students break out of stereotyped, habitual, and traditional thoughts and replace them with ways of thinking in different ways to find different solutions to a problem. Critical thinking helps students have a clearer sense of listening and respecting other people's opinions during debate. At the same time, help them see easy mistakes in their own thinking process; thereby helping students make the best possible judgments and judgments. Critical thinking will motivate students to actively update information, process information and select necessary and valuable information for the process of perception and practical action; avoid the phenomenon of "information noise" in today's technology era. Critical thinking will also help students think in a positive, optimistic way and actively solve problems encountered in life and study.

It can be affirmed that the training of critical thinking for learners is very important in higher education, especially in today's integration conditions. That is not only an urgent requirement of Vietnamese education but also a general trend of international education, a "key" of countries with modern and progressive education.

### 2.2. The need to develop critical thinking for students through teaching the course "Political Education"

Through the practice of teaching a number of subjects such as: Marxist-Leninist philosophy and other political education subjects, we found that most of the students often fell into a state of passive learning; expressed in the fact that they are not confident when expressing their opinions, confused in the process of using words when making arguments, many children fall into a state of dependence and lazy thinking. This leads to the inevitable result that the quality of their studies is not high. The above situation can be caused by many reasons, if we do not consider the causes of the training mechanism, training program, and facilities of the school, we can mention some of the main reasons such as: lecturers rarely ask questions that stimulate students' thinking; most students have no interest in learning; students lack confidence in the future and have no clear motivation to study.

This is the common situation in most subjects, disciplines and training systems at schools, not only in political education subjects. Therefore, the training and development of critical thinking for students is not a problem of only lecturers and students, but a common task of all levels, faculties and affiliated units of the university.

However, because the basic task of the political education subjects is to equip learners with a scientific worldview, a revolutionary outlook on life and a dialectical materialistic methodology - the fundamental basis of critical thinking - the development of ideas Critical thinking for students through teaching the Marxist-Leninist Philosophy module is a necessary and practical job. As first-year students, they are still confused in finding ways to adapt to the new learning environment, new learning methods... Besides, they only have basic knowledge and social understanding yet. many, the general level is not high...so if the lecturer does not have the right teaching method, it is easy to lead to the psychology of boredom, fear of learning, and passive learning in students. Therefore, the task of lecturers of Marxist-Leninist philosophy is to create a learning environment in which self-reading, self-study, and self-assessment will give students the initiative in learning, forming in the classroom they have the ability to adapt quickly, and especially to develop critical

thinking in them. This will also help students form scientific methodology, ways to receive, supplement, develop knowledge, and creatively apply that knowledge system to study other subjects well; and self-improvement.

### **3. Developing critical thinking for students through teaching the course "Political Education"**

#### **3.1. Some principle requirements for teachers**

It can be affirmed that, from any educational point of view, teachers are the most important factor for the quality of teaching because they play the role of guides, leading learners to access knowledge political theory knowledge according to the purpose of the curriculum. Therefore, to be able to train and develop critical thinking for students, teachers need to have pedagogical thinking and lecturers of Marxist-Leninist philosophy even more need to have critical thinking - a process of dialectical thinking. To be able to think critically, teachers must meet the following requirements:

- Having standard professional knowledge, here is the knowledge of the whole subject program and part of the study. Thus, in the process of teaching a unit of knowledge, the new lecturer can link and systematize the necessary knowledge to help learners easily grasp the main content of the lesson or subject. At the same time, when lecturers are qualified in professional knowledge, they will build confidence and actively lead learners to access knowledge through the critical process.
- Understanding of real life. Any subject requires teachers to have practical knowledge, and for highly abstract and generalized subjects, that is even more important and urgent. Because, if the lecturer is rich in practical knowledge, the lecture will be animated, linking the lecture content with practice through illustrations, examples from practice; that will stimulate students to actively explore, gather information and their own knowledge to participate in the process of debate and criticism with lecturers and classmates.
- Having pedagogical skills and necessary qualities to practice critical thinking. Pedagogical skills help teachers to observe, cover and grasp the psychology of learners, thereby effectively attracting learners. This is also the foundation for teachers to develop critical thinking skills for students.
- If critical thinking only requires students to have reasoning skills and problem-solving skills, for teachers, to be able to develop critical thinking for students, many other skills and qualities are needed such as: : active listening, accepting mistakes and being unbiased, asking thought-provoking questions, giving positive feedback, the ability to direct information to learners[4].

Besides, the teacher's style, including manners, manners, personality, thoughts and feelings also plays an important role. When the lecturer is enthusiastic and infuses emotions into the subject, it will attract learners to the critical process of seeking knowledge.

#### **3.2. Some measures to contribute to the development of critical thinking for students through teaching the course "Political Education"**

Firstly, students need to correctly determine their learning and career goals in the future; actively active in the process of learning and training, especially in self-study and self-study. This will directly contribute to improving students'

independent and creative thinking skills in general and critical thinking in particular. Currently, digital documents on critical thinking and critical thinking skills are abundant and diverse on the internet. With the effective support of Google, students can easily find useful and appropriate information and knowledge about critical thinking and critical thinking skills for themselves. There are also many online courses on critical thinking for students to choose from on the internet.

It is important for students to be aware of the importance of critical thinking, the need to equip knowledge and skills of critical thinking to be able to study and research science better. Because critical thinking is a creative and effective way of thinking and solving problems, meeting the job requirements after graduation, conquering employers, employing high-quality and qualified workers promotion, career success, happiness in life.

Secondly, in the process of studying and doing scientific research as well as in extracurricular activities, students must actively demonstrate the habit of critical thinking and positive attitude through the regular application of critical thinking methods thinking, critical thinking skills. First of all, students must improve their ability to record information properly by effective methods.

Consistent with the principles mentioned above as well as summarizing some of his own experiences in the process of teaching Marxist-Leninist philosophy in recent times, the author proposes a number of measures to train and develop Develop critical thinking for students as follows:

#### **3.2.1. Activate methods of dialogue, problem-solving, group discussion in the teaching process in order to promote students to think critically.**

With the teaching concept of "student-centered" teaching, in recent years, the use of methods such as conversation, problem-solving or group discussion has become familiar to teachers. However, the questioning technique in the above methods has not been promoted as effectively as expected, so it has not stimulated students to "brainstorm".

Therefore, in order for the innovation of teaching methods to be effective, especially in teaching highly abstract and general concepts and categories in Marxist-Leninist philosophy, teachers should ask questions situations to motivate students to think critically, to stimulate curiosity and the desire to learn the truth in students.

#### **3.2.2. Developing critical thinking in students through teaching students how to ask questions and solve problems.**

Before giving a new lecture, the lecturer asks the students to study the material, encourages them to think independently and asks different types of questions around the problem being studied, and guides the students to ask the right questions by identifying the "keywords" of the lesson content. At the same time, during the discussion, the lecturer asks the students to make comments or evaluate the problem, ask the students to explain the reasons, arguments, and prove their point of view. Working in this way will help students firmly form independent thinking and critical thinking. For example, when teaching about the material category, the lecturer may ask some students or groups of students to present the basic contents of Lenin's definition of matter as stated: the philosophical category, the existence objective, perceivable. Then, ask a few students to ask questions to clarify the problem, such as: why should matter be conceived

as a philosophical category? How to distinguish what is material and what is not?...During the discussion, the teacher acts as an "arbitrator" to guide and help the students to come to a conclusion final argument. In this activity, the lecturer suggests students use mind maps to express opinions and views.

Thus, students will see their own role in the process of knowledge acquisition, and help students add practical knowledge to the content of the lesson. Thereby also helping teachers change the learning atmosphere, stimulating students' interest in learning, helping the teaching process to achieve higher results.

### 3.2.3. Strengthening students' language ability through explaining terms in the teaching process.

Language is the material shell of thought; the richer the language, the more developed thinking is. However, through teaching practice and interacting with many students, I find that there are a large number of students who are quite confused in using Vietnamese words, many of them do not clearly understand the meanings of words that teachers use. I still often use such as: objective, subjective, comprehensive, specific, historical, possible, possibility... Meanwhile, there are many terms in Marxist-Leninist philosophy subject to abstract so their interpretation becomes even more necessary for students. Understanding the meanings of terms will help them become more confident in the process of debating, discussing and presenting their views. Thereby, their Vietnamese vocabulary and Vietnamese grammar will be improved, contributing to promoting more development thinking.

## 4. Conclusion

Thus, it can be said that critical thinking is one of the necessary factors for students' success in life, study and work process after graduation. In the period of fundamental and comprehensive reform of education in the spirit of the 8th Resolution of the Party Central Committee, term XI, the training of pedagogical thinking for students is even more necessary and important. That helps them become more cognitively mature, more interested in the process of learning and exchanging, more open in admitting their own mistakes. From there, students can be aware of theoretical issues being communicated, effectively use conflicting information flows, and explain real-life problems that have been, are happening and will take place. At the same time, developing critical thinking will also help students learn other subjects well, expand their ability to practice other necessary competencies and qualities to meet the requirements of human resource training in the industrial career modernize the country.

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