

BEYOND CRITICAL THINKING

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<http://philosophy.hku.hk/think/critical/meta.php>

Most people would agree that the promotion of critical thinking is a central educational aim. But there are other complementary thinking skills which should not be neglected.

One example is creativity. In our personal and professional life, we are always faced with problems which we need to resolve. We need creative thinking to come up with solutions, and we need critical thinking to evaluate and improve these solutions. In our website we have a learning module which is specifically about creativity.

But there is another aspect of thinking that also deserves our attention, and that is metacognition, or “thinking about thinking”. Metacognition is about knowing more about our own thinking processes and being able to monitor and control them. Critical thinking must involve some amount of metacognition, because we need to become aware of our own reasoning, and find ways to improve them.

Becoming a good and effective thinker is not just a matter of learning logic or other principles of reasoning. It also requires insight into our own minds, understanding our strengths and weaknesses. It is also important to obtain some understanding of human psychology, such as the typical cognitive biases that might influence our decisions. In addition, the successful application of theoretical knowledge also requires the right kind of personality and attitude. For example, persistence in problem-solving and a strong desire for self-improvement are both valuable traits that can enhance our thinking skills in the long run.

What this means is that a disciplined and reflective mindset is very important for improving thinking. The development of this kind of metacognitive thinking is very often given very little emphasis in the teaching and learning of critical thinking. We suggest that the study of critical thinking should be understood as one aspect of the enhancement of metacognition. If you are interested to learn more about the connections between critical thinking and metacognition, we have made available a research paper on this topic below:

Joe Lau (2015) "Metacognitive Education: Going beyond critical thinking" In Davies and Barnett (eds.) (2015) *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Thinking in Higher Education*. Palgrave.