

Introduction

This year for our annual symposium on teaching effectiveness the Embry Riddle Extended Campus Faculty Development Committee selected the subject of teaching critical thinking as our theme. Selection of this topic raises some interesting questions. Just what is critical thinking? Can it be taught, can it be taught to adult students who already have well-established thinking patterns and behaviors? What is the difference in scientific thinking, mathematical thinking, moral reasoning, thinking philosophically, and critical thinking? Are all of these terms parts of the same process or are there true differences? If they are not the same, are there preferences with which the teacher should be aware, in which applies in a given circumstance?

Is critical thinking just an orderly acquisition and compilation of information in some particular way? Is critical thinking a set of skills to be learned and practiced without regard for the results of the process to reach some neutral or static conclusion?

If critical thinking is not this, then what is it? If it is, as stated by Michael Scriven and Richard Paul, in *Defining Critical Thinking*, “the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, synthesizing and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action”, is this, then, a legitimate role for the teacher in higher education – this drive to “belief and action; based only on a thinking process. If we are to accept this definition are we in the business of teaching people how to arrive at what they believe and how to determine what actions they will take?

Hopefully, we will address some of these questions in the presentations to follow. I ask that each of you critically evaluate what is presented.

The views expressed in the papers presented are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of Embry Riddle Extended Campus Faculty Development Committee, the Extended Campus administration, or the University.

The papers contain within were selected, in blind review by a jury of peers.

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(reference: M. Scriven and R. Paul, *Defining Critical Thinking*, A draft statement for the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking,
<http://www.criticalthinking.org/University/univclass/Defining.nclk>)