

Critical Thinking: How the Learning Resource Center Users at Ibri College Deal with the Library Borrowed Material?

Afraa AL- Hatmi,

afara.ibr@cas.edu.om

Majid Al-Zeedi

Majed.ibr@cas.edu.om

Younes Audeh

^{1, 2, 3} University of Technology and Applied Sciences, English Department /Ibri College
Sultanate of Oman

younes.ibr@cas.edu.om

Abstract

Critical thinking is the ability to distinguish between the knowledge people have, and the form it reaches after being checked, sifted, analyzed, and produced as a final product. This century boasts the wide-spread effect of critical thinking; questioning fact is the core of dealing with matters to uncover their essence, bearing in mind that nothing should be taken as a matter of faith. Socrates, for example, had a special and unique way of treating matters: asking questions which normally end with cogent answers. This paper unfolds important ways that the Learning Resource Centre (LRC)-University of Technology and Applied Sciences- users follow while reading, borrowing, or elaborating any material they use. In order to know how the (LRC) users treat materials at hand- whether hard or soft- the researchers have conducted some ongoing workshops about the aim of being inside the (LRC), and finally they distributed a questionnaire among the users- all levels: from Foundation stage till year Four. What has been reached is that all (LRC) users do not believe blindly in what they read: they question that to the extreme. Discussion, implications, recommendations, and applications will be highlighted in depth throughout the paper.

Keywords: blindly, faculty members, local community, LRC, online journals, users

Introduction

The term “Critical Thinking” is a skill by which things become apparent and have a new shape and structure different from the original. What is seen and felt becomes so different when

analyzed logically, depending on proofs and guidelines that convince the audience. Philosophers were the first people to follow the way of questioning issues to make them as clear as possible. This paper focusses on the term “Critical Thinking”, and the way it is dealt with by the (LRC) users at Ibri College of Applied Sciences- the Sultanate of Oman.

Literature Review

Throughout past decades, numerous trends were followed to explore “Critical Thinking”. In fact, many definitions were reached; some were exact and to the point, while others were just personal opinions, which were not based on legitimate facts. However, the following definition seems logical and better than others. “Good critical thinking included recognizing good arguments even when we disagree with them, and poor arguments even when these support our own point of view (Learn, 2021, Para. 6). As the days went by, some clearer definitions appeared in this arena and had comprehensive meaning that covered the field of critical thinking. “The ability to analyze arguments, evaluate evidence, and distinguish between fact and opinion is a valuable skill. As a result, critical thinking is a highly sought after ability that can benefit you at work and in your personal life” (Learn, 2021, Para. 2).

In some cases parents seem to be worried about their kids and their future career. They-kids-should be aware of many aspects related to thinking critically, not blindly, or taken as a matter of faith. Problems faced should be thought critically with final decisions, or, sometimes, tested against “Logic”. So children have the priority to think first for themselves in the way they see helps them tackle problems before leaving home to face life and careers.

In fact, no matter what your child plans to do professionally someday, he will need to know how to think critically, solve problems, and make decisions. As a parent, it’s important that you ensure that your kids can think for themselves and have developed a healthy critical mindset before they leave the nest. (Gordon, 2021, Para. 2).

Children who adopt critical thinking strategy normally are looked at as open-minded and more observant. They utilize logic, not emotions, in analyzing issues. Moreover, they are more aware of their self-esteem and position in the surrounding society. “Critical thinking also allows kids to gain a deeper understanding of the world including how they see themselves in that world. Additionally, kids who learn to think critically tend to be observant and open minded” (Gordon, 2021, Para. 10). Parents should encourage their kids to feel the advantages and disadvantages of the topic they are working on. After finishing, parents may ask kids about the results they have received and evaluate them, as this will be a good lesson for next time experience.

Help your child consider pros and cons, but don’t be afraid to let her make a wrong choice. Then evaluate the decision late. Ask your child, “How do you feel about your decision? What would you do differently next time?”(Scholastic Parents Staff, (n.d), Para. 6).

At schools, clever teachers can fathom the abilities of their students and deal with this case accordingly. Moreover, they –teachers- should encourage students to not memorize facts, as if they were multiplication processes, but also, to evaluate and criticize what they learn, even in books, and daily life activities. It is the ability to weigh things properly. “My high school teachers gave similar speeches when describing what would be expected of us in college: it’s not about the facts you know, but rather about your ability to evaluate them” (Patterson, 2020, Para. 2). Moreover, to face daily matters and problems is normal, whether in the personal or professional life, but what is more important is learning how to behave in this situation and solve these snags. “if you are bogged down in the trivial day matters of your professional and personal life, learning how to think critically can help you rise above these issues and focus your energies where they are needed-to solve problems and accomplish objectives”(Ho, 2021, Para.3).

To think critically means to start analyzing any problem from the scratch; the source of the problem, step -by -step, till the solution is reached. The following procedure describes the process of examining a collapsed car till pinpointing the cause of the problem:

Imagine that a car has stopped and seems difficult to start. One might follow the following logical steps to check where the problem lies.

“1. Vehicle will not start. Why?

2. Battery is dead. Why?

3. The alternator is not functioning. Why?

4. The alternator belt has broken. Why?

5. It was old and worn out. Why?

6. The car is not maintained according to the manufacturer’s recommendation”. (Ho, 2021, Para.5).

Critical thinking cannot exist in vacuum, or in a limited situation; it should be in a place where people stay. It starts with gathering basic information about the issue at hand and asking logical and thoughtful questions that serve solving the problem. If a quarrel happens between the manager and an employee in a certain company, then there should be a logical basis upon which things are solved.

The critical thinking process typically includes steps such as collecting information and data, asking thoughtful questions and analyzing possible solutions. For example, if you are working in human resources and need to resolve a conflict between two employees, you will use critical thinking to understand the nature of the conflict and what action should be taken to resolve the situation (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021, Para. 4).

In pure business, mainly major companies, if a certain problem occurs, it should be treated in a very wise and critical way; business people are normally curious and inquisitive to go deep to see the causes of a certain financial problem in order to find the ultimate solutions. Interestingly enough, some smart businessmen create problems and start enjoying themselves in solving them to promote experience in critical thinking. To conclude, critical thinkers are fond of **Why** and **What** behind every issues.

Critical thinkers are inquisitive and look to find the *What* and *Why* behind every proposition. We saw the need for this when our financial markets melted in 2008. Crisis can bring out the best critical thinking because it forces you to question how and why you ended up in trouble (Baldoni, 2010, Para. 3).

Could critical thinking be taught? The possible answer is “Yes”, but there should be some precautions; it is a complex skill that needs smart and experienced people with an appropriate background in tackling issues, especially the ones that affect the human beings, such as declaring wars, conducting peace treaties, etc. “Can we teach critical thinking? Yes, but with certain limitations. Even within a single domain critical thinking is a complex, higher-order skill that is hard to learn and even harder to transfer across domains”. (Kaminske, (n.d), Para. 11).

Critical thinking needs a good background of knowledge to have good results. A warrior without a sword is nothing. Knowledge and experience in the field of critical thinking support the decision taken and give good results.

Of course critical thinking without knowledge is embarrassingly idle, like a farmer without a field. They need each other-thought and knowledge. They can also disappear into one another as they work. Once we have established that-that they are separate, capable of emerging, and one another-we can get at the marrow and fear of this whole thing (Heick, 2014, Para.5).

Methodology

The researchers have distributed a questionnaire among a good number of the (LRC) users at Ibri College. This covers the Foundation year (FY) till the Fourth.

Population:

The population of this study belong to different and diverse majors: (FY), First, Second, Third, and Fourth year students. They are between 18-24 years of age. They come from different parts of Oman: downtown, remote villages, cities, coastal areas, etc.

Questionnaire Analysis

Table 1

I do recommend conducting workshops, seminars, training, and meetings on Critical Thinking.	Yes	No
	18	2
	90%	10%

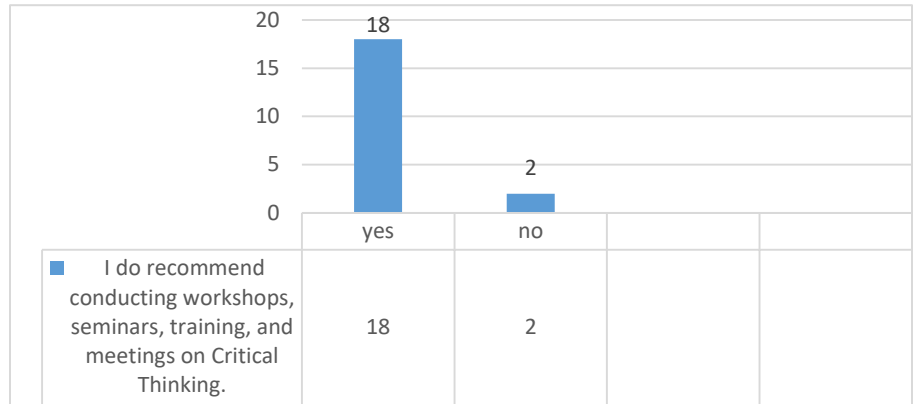


Table 1 shows that 90% of participants recommend holding Critical Thinking workshops, seminars, training, and meetings. This high percentage demonstrates the importance of students developing and enhancing their critical thinking skills.

Table 2

I recommend that there should be specific Critical Thinking courses at universities as general requirements.	Yes	No
	12	4
	60%	40%

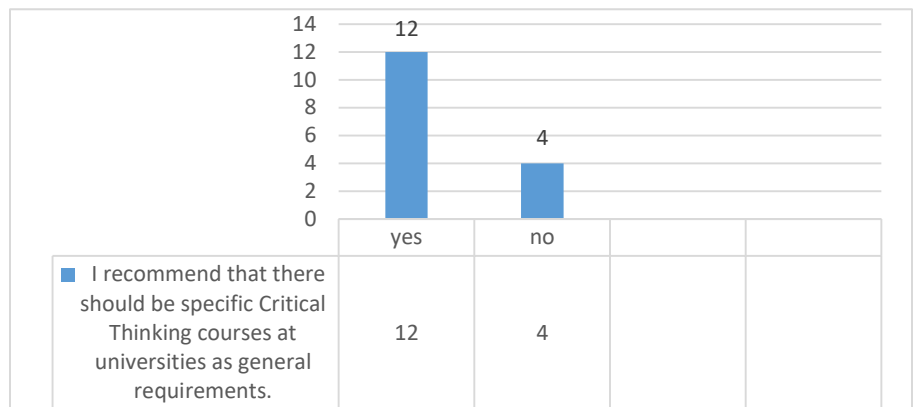


Table 2 shows that 60% of participants believe that taking specific Critical Thinking courses at universities is important as a general requirement.

Table 3

I think Critical Thinking motivates students and frees them from traditional ways of tackling issues.	Yes	No
	20	-
	100%	-

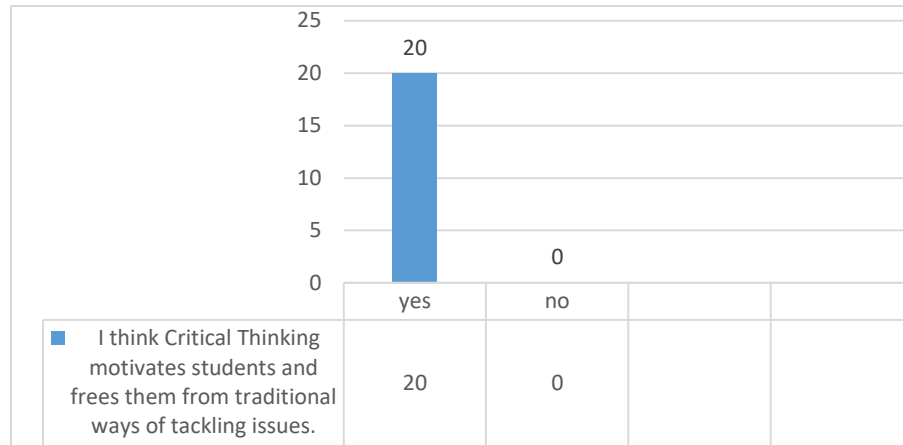


Table 3 shows that 100% of students realize that Critical Thinking motivates them and frees them from traditional ways of tackling issues.

Table 4

In case I face any vague issues, which I am not sure of, I refer to the Learning Resource Centre specialist to explain that for me critically.	Yes	No
	14	6
	70%	30%

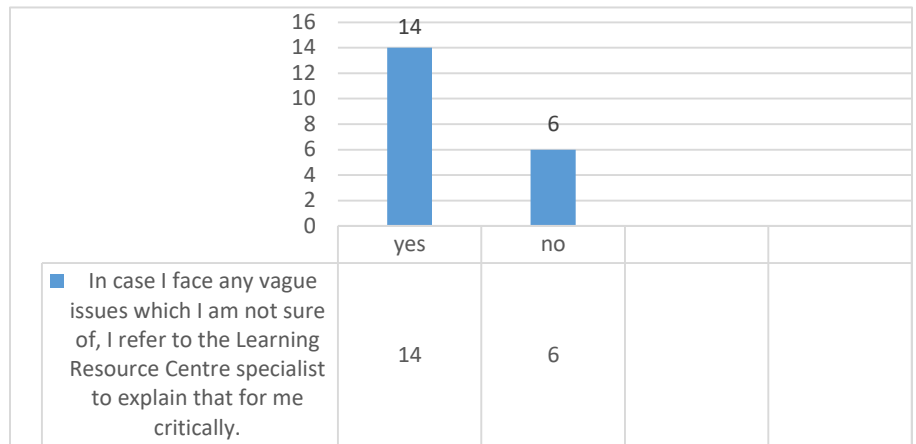


Table 4 shows that 70% of participants agree that if they face any vague issues that they are unsure of, they refer to the Learning Resource Centre specialist to explain them critically. This highlights the necessity of the Learning Resources Center in dealing with critical thinking issues.

Table 5

If students' critical thinking knowledge is low about any material in the library, the Learning Resource Centre specialist conducts detailed meetings with the concerned ones.	Yes	No
	12	8
	60%	40%

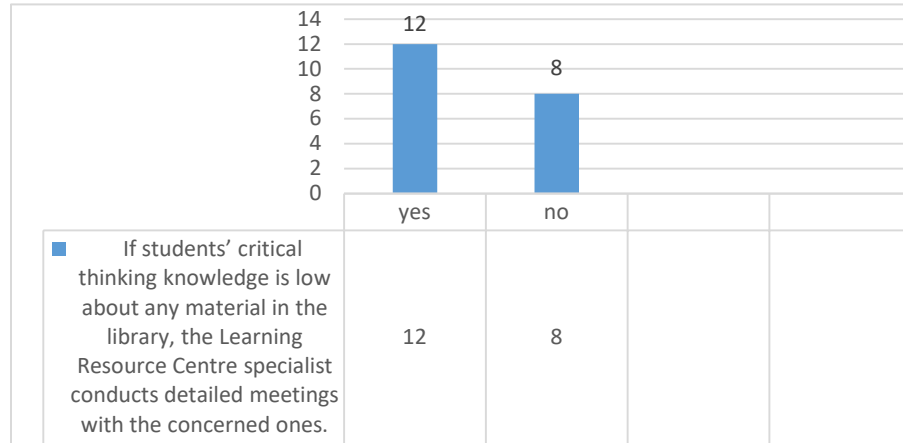


Table 5 shows that 60% agree that if students' critical thinking knowledge of any material in the library is low, the Learning Resource Centre specialist conducts detailed meetings with the concerned ones. This demonstrates the significant role that the Learning Resource Center plays in the development of students' critical thinking skills.

Table 6

The Learning Resource Centre specialist always assists me in the field of critical thinking by all means: in person, emails, Twitter, etc.	Yes	No
	17	3
	85%	15%

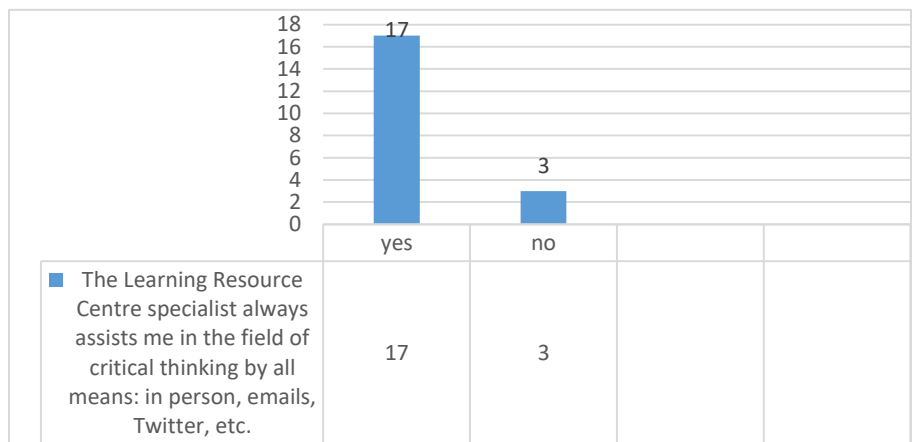


Table 6 shows that 85% of students state that the Learning Resource Centre specialist always assists them in the field of critical thinking through all means: in-person, emails, Twitter, etc.

Table 7

The Learning Resource Centre specialist takes part in enhancing my critical thinking, and helps me choose the recommended resources and references suitable for my research papers.	Yes	No
	16	4
	80%	20%

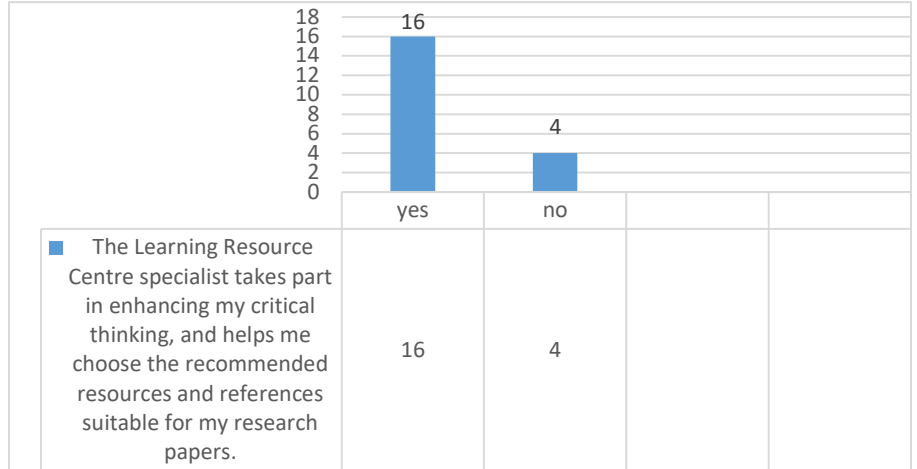
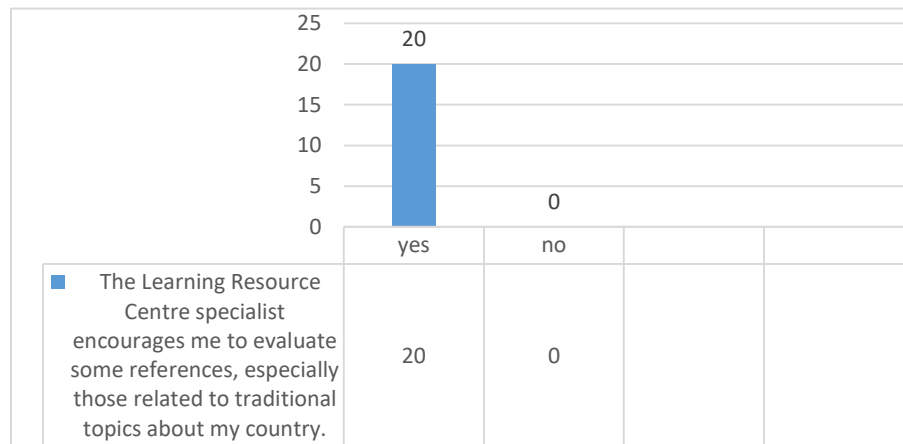


Table 7 shows that 80% of respondents believe the Learning Resource Centre specialist helps them enhance their critical thinking skills and select appropriate resources and references for their research papers.

Table 8

The Learning Resource Centre specialist encourages me to evaluate some references, especially those related to traditional topics about my country.	Yes	No
	20	-
	100%	-



According to Table 8, all participants agree that the Learning Resource Centre specialist encourages them to evaluate some references, especially those related to traditional topics about their country.

Table 9

When I express myself critically, I welcome any questions, or comments from others to justify my opinion.	Agree	Disagree
	14	6
	70%	30%

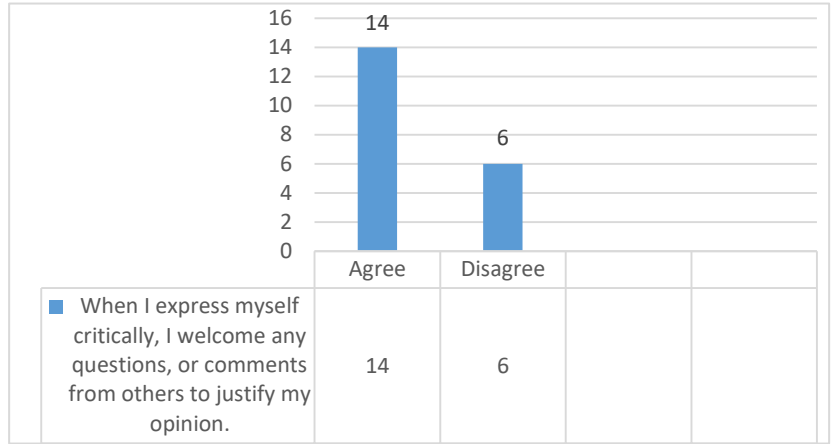
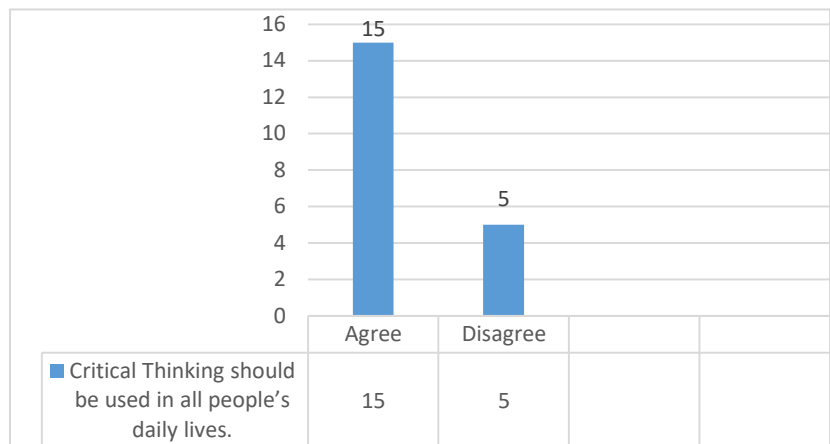


Table 9 illustrates that 70% of students agree that when they express themselves critically, they welcome any questions, or comments from others to justify their opinion.

Table 10

Critical Thinking should be used in all people's daily lives.	Agree	Disagree
	15	5
	75%	25%



According to Table 10, 75% of participants believe that Critical Thinking should be used in all aspects of people's daily lives.

Recommendations

-critical thinking means the ability to utilize the knowledge one possesses to evaluate a certain issue at hand; it should be used with ultimate care.

-critical thinking is the smart weapon that solves most problems people face; students and tutors should bear in mind that critical thinking helps deal with matters logically.

-normally, human beings are accused of being too much emotional, and this gives us the wrong decision how to respond to situations. All things should be examined and tested in advance.

-in general, more haste, less speed; one should stop and think deeply about what the best action to adopt.

-one should exert efforts to think, work, and analyze matters around, and take the safest way without spoiling people's lives, in case critical thinking results in a disaster.

-users of the (LRC) stuff should report any material that has any negative things that contradict with the ethics of the local community.

-courses and/or workshops should be conducted in academic institutions on Critical Thinking.

-students should not hesitate to refer to their teachers regarding any vague issues that might hinder their comprehension in any course they are taking, especially Critical Thinking.

Conclusion

Depending on the study performed at Ibri College of Applied Sciences, and the workshops on explaining what critical thinking means, it has become clear that things should not be taken as a matter of faith- blindly. The Holy Koran is the only book that is perfect with no doubt at all. It is the Book of Allah, the Almighty. Other sources of knowledge on earth are still, and will remain matters of controversy.

Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to thank all participants who helped in this study without whom this work wouldn't have come to existence.

About the Researchers

Afraa Hamed AL- Hatmi is an Information Resources Specialist in the LRC (Learning Resource Center) at Ibri College of Applied Sciences, Ministry of Higher Education- the

Sultanate of Oman. She holds a Master's Degree in Libraries and Information Science from Alexandria University –Egypt, 2007, Bachelor's Degree (Libraries and Documentation), Sultan Qaboos University -Sultanate of Oman, 1998. Currently, she is a postgraduate student in the International Islamic University Malaysia, Doctor of Philosophy -Library and Information Science.

Majid Al Zeedi is an Information Resources Specialist in the (LRC)—Learning Resource Centre- at Ibri College of Applied Sciences, Ministry of Higher education – the Sultanate of Oman. He holds a Master's Degree in Technology Education from AOU (Arab Open University) of Oman, 2017, Bachelor's Degree in Libraries and Information Science, Sultan Qaboos University – Sultanate of Oman, 2003.

Younes Audeh is the Head of the Translation Committee, and lecturer at the Department of English at Ibri College of Applied Sciences -the Sultanate of Oman. He is an M.A. holder in Applied Linguistics from Indiana University of Pennsylvania- USA. He has been teaching English as an ESL/EFL for a long time. He has taught at a number of colleges and universities in different countries. His research interest is Academic Writing.

References

Baldoni, J. (2010, Jan. 20th). How leaders should think critically. Retrieved on Sept. 21st .2021,

from <https://hbr.org>

Heick, T. (2014). What does 'critical thinking' mean? Retrieved on Sept. 21st .2021, from

<https://www.teachthought.com>

Ho, L. (2021, July 21st). How to think critically: 5 powerful techniques. Retrieved on Sept. 21st .2021,

from <https://www.lifehack.org>

Indeed Editorial Team. (2021, July 27th). 10 essential critical thinking skills and how to improve them.

Retrieved on Sept. 27.2021, from <https://www.indeed.com>

Kaminske, A.N. (n.d.). Can we teach critical thinking? Retrieved on Sept. 21st .2021, from

<https://learningscientists.org>

Learn, F. (2021, July 9th). How to think critically-a guide to creative and critical thinking. Retrieved on

Sept. 21st .2021, from <https://www.futurelearn.com>

Patterson, R. (2020, June 26th). 7 ways to improve your critical thinking skills. Retrieved on Sept. 21st

2021, from <https://collegeinfo geek.com>

Scholastic Parents Staff (n.d.). Think about it: critical thinking. Retrieved on Sept. 21st .2021, from

<https://www.scholastic.com>

Appendices

Questionnaire

Hello all,

The following is a questionnaire that highlights an important issue that you need to be aware of in your personal and academic life; Critical Thinking. This questionnaire is conducted for a mixture of students at Ibri College of Applied Sciences for all majors represented by (20 students). This questionnaire consists of two kinds of questions (**Yes/ No - Agree/Disagree**). You don't have to write your names.

Yes/ No Questions

1. When I read a certain text, I usually evaluate, judge, think deeply, and make a decision on the material I read.
A. Yes B.No
2. When I gather information, I make predictions and explore all things related to that: positive or negative.
A.Yes B.No
3. I can ask questions to elicit judgements, conclusions, and references supported by logical interpretations.
A.Yes B.No
4. I can frankly show whether I like, or dislike something.
A.Yes B.No
5. I can initiate and utilize alternative ways to reach important choices. To sum, I am a risk-taker.
A.Yes B.No
6. Critical Thinking activities make me do my best to reach a better solution.
A.Yes B.No
7. Sometimes, Critical Thinking tasks make me a little bit nervous.
A.Yes B.No
8. I do recommend conducting workshops, seminars, training, and meetings on Critical Thinking.
A.Yes B.No

9. I recommend that there should be specific Critical Thinking courses at universities as general requirements.

A.Yes B.No

10. I think Critical Thinking motivates students and frees them from traditional ways of tackling issues.

A.yes B.No

11. In case I face any vague issues which I am not sure of, I refer to the Learning Resource Centre specialist to explain that for me critically.

A.yes B.No

12. If students' critical thinking knowledge is low about any material in the library, the Learning Resource Centre specialist conducts detailed meetings with the concerned ones..

A.yes B.No

13. The Learning Resource Centre specialist always assists me in the field of Critical Thinking by all means: in person, emails, Twitter, etc.

A.yes B.No

14. The Learning Resource Centre specialist takes part in enhancing my Critical Thinking, and helps me choose the recommended resources and references suitable for my research papers.

A.yes B.No

15. The Learning Resource Centre specialist encourages me to evaluate some references, especially those related to traditional topics about my country.

A.yes B.No

Agree/ Disagree Questions

16. I possess some critical thinking strengths.

1. Agree 2. Disagree

17. I can say that I have a good way of developing my critical thinking abilities.

1. Agree 2. Disagree

18. I feel happy when my teachers ask me questions to motivate my critical thinking ability.

1. Agree

2. Disagree

19. When I express myself critically, I welcome any questions, or comments from others to justify my opinion.

1. Agree

2. Disagree

20. Critical Thinking should be used in all people's daily lives.

1. Agree

2. Disagree