



Critical Thinking Pedagogy: Using Textbooks Evaluation and Content Analysis Techniques for Saudi University Students

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ABSTRACT

This research has an aim to investigate to what extent Saudi English textbooks help in enhancing Saudi student's critical thinking skills. The research topic was selected by keeping in mind the experience that Saudi Arabia students always face difficulty in the application of critical thinking skills for the determination of best possible solutions. The critical thinking skills are the necessity of professional life and if students of Saudi Arabia are failed in applying it to a particular situation, then it is important to investigate the reasons for it. The literature has concluded the same thing that the critical thinking skills learning should of that type which helps students in applying it to a particular situation because if they do not know its application, then critical thinking skill is useless. The past studies have revealed that the English textbooks have some elements of critical thinking skills but, it is important to investigate that either specific textbook contains the elements by which learner can learn the critical thinking skill or not. The primary research data was collected through a questionnaire of Five Point Likert Scale, which shows that the teachers of Saudi Arabia have neutral reply towards the role of English Textbook activities in the development of critical thinking skills. Teachers who are the research respondents of this study claimed that some gaps exist in the Saudi curricula for the development of critical thinking skills among students. This study successfully explored the role of curricula in the development of critical thinking skills among students, and how much Saudi Arabia curricula is efficient in it.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays educational system in Saudi Arabia is required for higher-order thinking skills which is called critical thinking. Many organizations and institutions National Center on Education and Economy ,the American Diploma) have pointed out the need for teaching students how to think critically(Willingham,2007) . Teaching critical thinking is not easy task for both teacher and students because it is intertwined with domain knowledge, and is required looking at multiple perspectives, it is required more practice inside classroom to apply it. Critical thinking is essential for academic quality work, and it is paradigmatic case” (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004, p .75). The researcher contributes cognitive levels of Bloom’s taxonomy with the study, especially evaluation and analysis skills in classrooms.

The concept of teaching critical thinking consists of reasoned judgement which shows both sides of an issues , and creates deductive and inductive arguments and solving problems (Willingham, 2000: & Al Ghamdi & Deraney, 2013). Many theories have recognized the importance of teaching critical thinking (Elder, 2002, 2005; Faccione, 1992; McPeck, 1990; Siegel, 1988; Fisher, 2001). When reading the literature, one can find as many definitions of critical thinking as there are authors. They all reflect thinking as a skill or art. The 8th Annual International Conference on CT and Education Reform in summer 1987 defined it by Scriven & Paul as" it is self-guided, self-disciplined thinking which attempts to reason at the highest level of quality in a fair-minded way".

In the context of ELT in Saudi Arabia, textbook is essential element of teaching and learning, and textbook evaluation recently is an important issue for the improvement of the quality curriculum. The ability to think critically and needs flexibility were

recognized in 1999 by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC), which argued that curriculum was needed to be developed and equipped with life-long skills that can be acquired outside schools (Lawrence,2011). Researches in ELT in evaluation of textbooks and improving critical thinking need new qualitative research technique, which is Content Analysis. Researchers used such technique to analyze and quantify the meanings and relationships of concepts, then make inferences about the whole messages. To apply CA in any text, the text is coded, broken down into categories and then examined by either conceptual analysis or rational analysis. My research that is about assessment of Saudi system of education and its curriculum if it improved critical thinking skills by using textbook evaluation to prepare students for long-life skills that can be used outside of school, and content analysis technique.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Bailin and Battersby (2010), critical thinking argument is treated in the “broad sense” as people in context-specific situations of dialectic and dialogue utter it. They stress that critical thinking is a kind of inquiry : a process of “carefully examining an issue in order to come to a reasoned judgment” that often occurs in social interaction , casting critical thinking this way implies that the process of critical thinking involves the parsing of arguments, stressing context and constructive analysis, rather than just isolated critique , It also focuses on the examination and evaluation of alternative arguments, demonstrating that critical thinking does not constitute a monological critique of any one argument.

Allamnakhras (2013) stresses that many theorists and researchers have recognized the importance of critical thinking, in order to generate thinking skills, in accordance with the rapid technological changes in educational process. According to him, skills like analysis and evaluation are necessary not only in educational achievements but also in workplaces. He states that critical thinking is important not only for individuals but also for the society and uses it as tool of making social functions. Danial (2007) states that there are a large number of programs that encourage the teaching of critical thinking for students to supplement regular curricula, rather than replacing it.

University students are expected to be equipped with critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they are the future human capital and need to meet

the requirements of employers in hiring people. However, Othman, Mohd Salleh, alEdrus and Sulaiman (2008) demonstrate that the learning context of students is one of the major factors contributing to the deficiency of generic skills particularly critical thinking and problem solving skills. Richard & Linda (2008) state that the quality of our life depends on the quality of our thoughts and claim that critical thinkers can effectively communicate, ask vital questions and solutions due to their self-directed, self-monitored and self-corrective thinking. Miller, Nentl, and Zietlow (2010) state that there are six successive stages of learning processes inside the classroom which contribute significantly to today's educational marketplace, and they promote higher forms of thinking in education Bloom's Taxonomy.

Touran, Bayezid, and Mahnaz, (2014) state many definitions for "textbooks" and "evaluation" but the most appropriate one is , “ materials that are assessed by either teachers or learners to judge the fitness of something for particular purposes” . They argue that this technique is used for qualifying and homogenizing the textbooks content with the learning and teaching requirements in EFL/ESL settings. According to Litz (2016) there are several reasons for textbooks evaluation and it signals an important administrative and educational decision of professional investments. He states that one of the most important reasons for textbook evaluation is that it can be useful for the teacher development and professional growth.

According to Steve (2001), content analysis is defined by many researchers as" systematic techniques to identify specified characteristics of messages; it is not restricted to context units and may include sampling units and recording units" (Holsti, 1969, Stigler, Gonzales, Kawanaka, Knoll, & Serrano, 1999). He characterized "content analysis technique as a useful technique for allowing us to discover and describe the focus of individual, group, institutional, or social attention"(p. 1). He claims that content analysis is the most common notion which may be used for stylistic reasons, to assess the criteria and to measure the effectiveness of materials.

Roohani, Taheri and Poorzangeneh (2004) used content analysis technique to evaluate cognitive processes by drawing in Bloom's revised taxonomy as a framework . They used two raters

to carry out content analysis for determining the frequency of cognitive processes based on cognitive domain in BRT. Alnofaie (2013) attempted to discover the applicability of CT pedagogy in post-secondary school learners in EFL inside classrooms by tracking dialogues inside the classroom and observing the learner's attitudes conducted another study

According to Freeley & Steinberg, (2000) instruction in critical thinking aims at achieving the ability to explore, criticize, or advocate different ideas, to reason inductively and deductively, and to infer sound conclusions from ambiguous statements.

3. METHODOLOGY

The researcher has adopted the descriptive analytical method in this study; it is based on descriptive textbook activities, where the researcher investigated a specific phenomenon. This study used content analysis in order to investigate critical thinking skills in Well Read Skills and Strategies" series I""textbook activities ,in light of the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy. Moreover, the researcher used questionnaire in order to collect adequate and required data for the study and to find out an answer the questions of the research. Participants in the study were (53) teachers teaching English in the Faculties of Languages and Translation in Saudi universities.

5. RESULTS

The researcher claims that this textbook's activities enhance the low level of thinking skills more than the high level of thinking skills. The book helps in improving the students' abilities to remember, understand, and apply knowledge. The book concentrates more in recalling and recognizing specific facts, patterns and concepts which serve in the development of intellectual abilities and skills, but there are few exercises that encourage high order learning skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating .Some teachers claim that some students can learn from previous decisions., anticipate changes into the environment by looking at evidences that things are changing rather than evidences that stay the same., recognize the similarities and differences among the concepts or situations ,and avoid taking a decision in issues lacking adequate evidences, facts and knowledge. But they may have many reasons and barriers which unable learners in applying critical thinking

5. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is essential to include more exercises in Saudi English textbooks in order to help Saudi students develop the high level of thinking skills.
- Saudi EFL trainers are greatly recommended to establish training programs for the professional development of EFL teachers aiming at a well understanding of the pedagogical needs to develop the high level of critical thinking skills of Saudi students.
- Learners should be trained on how to apply the high level of critical thinking skills.
- Teachers should inform learners of the advantages of applying the high level of critical thinking skills and the independent learning style. They can also motivate them by indicating their ability to be in charge of their own learning and provide the necessary guidance.

Based on the findings of the current research, the researcher presents some recommendations for future research.

- More participants should be involved in order to maintain better understanding of this approach. This includes having more EFL female instructors, this will help to obtain more comprehensive and accurate results.
- Duplicating this study on Saudi male school students is extremely suggested to compare its effects with the current study results.
- Finally, future research should consider carrying out other instruments for collecting data such as classroom observation in order to collect further information about the current study approach.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated strong evidence of the benefits of the critical thinking skills' development among students in order to prepare them for the future career, and these skills can be best developed by the textbook activities. Currently, Saudi Arabia English textbooks suffer from some gaps in helping students develop the high level of critical thinking skills. Despite the fact that the learning and teaching of these skills are complex processes, teacher's teaching style matters a lot in the development of critical thinking skills.

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