Comparing Critical Thinking Conceptualization of Faculty in and Outside Colleges of Agriculture

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Most universities have critical thinking as one of their student learning outcomes or as part of their quality enhancement program.

Critical thinking is a complex concept.

Most faculty do not have a clear concept of what critical thinking looks like and especially how to evaluate it.
The purpose of this study was to understand how college of agriculture faculty conceptualize critical thinking versus how non-agriculture faculty conceptualize it.
Methods

- Convenience sample
  - Workshop participants at an ALE conference (32)
  - Participants of a college-wide Critical Thinking Academy in a college of agriculture (30)
Participants asked to define critical thinking by creating a mind map of key concepts or behaviors that describe/define critical thinking.
Methods

- Deductive analysis using Paul & Elder’s Elements of Thought (2012) as the framework:
  - Purpose, Questions, Information, Inferences, Concepts, Implications, Assumptions, and Points of View
  - Two investigators independently analyzed maps
  - Met to reconcile differences in conceptualization
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Implications

- Richard Paul states that all learning occurs with a purpose (Paul & Elder, 2012)
- The fact that neither group identified purpose implies that faculty do not think about the purpose of their teaching.
- Faculty not concerned that students understand the purpose of their field of study, of the authors of their texts, or the purpose of the courses they are taking.
Leadership educators identified POV while AG did not.

Many leadership theories (transformational, LMX, Social Change Model) indirectly include Point of View as part of their relational approaches.

Imply that considering others’ POV is a part of what good leaders do and what leadership educators teach.
Conclusions

- “To think logically is to think relevantly to the purpose that initiated the thinking…” Susan Stebbing (1939)
- Being able to hear multiple perspectives is critical to being a Fair-minded thinker.
Further Study Needed

- With the emphasis on knowing your purpose as an element of critical thinking, why is it that university faculty failed to identify this element?

- Why, did faculty in the college of agriculture not consider POV as an element of critical thinking?