Critical Thinking in an International Context
Where were you educated?
Do you feel critical thinking was valued in your education?
If not, give an example of something that was valued?
Why Critical Thinking in an International Context

- Global interest in the critical thinking educational paradigm is evident.
- Rhetoric and scholarly discussion largely treats critical thinking as a universal paradigm and pays scant attention to the intercultural dimensions of thinking.
- Voices that claim other cultural modes of reasoning are being silenced.
- Sense that critical thinking skills are important for professional lives in a globalized world.
- Curriculum integration is a common goal of International Education and critical thinking is often considered a desirable learning outcome for students studying abroad.
Working Definition of Critical Thinking

A mode of thinking that:

• Involves analysis and reasoning
• Aims to be objective
• Has an aim or purpose, for example solving a problem or developing an informed opinion
• Includes reflective and self-reflective thinking
• Involves use of knowledge and/or context
• Derives from the Greco-Roman traditions of argumentation
Scholarship on Critical Thinking

• Extensive and comes from many different disciplines of inquiry
• Minimal synthesis and many contradictions
• Focus on Asian students in western educational systems
• Did not find much scholarship and research on critical thinking in the field of international education
• This session: Highlights concepts and conclusions from the scholarship that we find most interesting and applicable for international education to provide context for discussion and further engagement with this topic
Other Modes of Teaching & Learning

- The relationships between foundational knowledge, traditional pedagogies, and critical thinking
- Misunderstandings about learning strategies that involves memorization or repetition
- Cultural differences in thinking processes
Social Roles & Communication Styles

• Argumentation and value placed on speaking in the classroom
• Different comfort levels with criticality
• Positionality—social structures in academic spaces
Critical Thinking & Dispositions

• Correlation between critical thinking skills and dispositional factors
  • Open-mindedness, maturity, confidence, truth-seeking, curiosity etc.
  • The impact of culture on dispositional factors
• International Education: potential to impact not only critical thinking skills but also dispositional factors
Good Thinking = Rational Thinking?

• Different cultural understandings of good thinking
  • Subjectivity
  • Objectivity
  • Ethics

• Holistic, intuitive and other forms of thinking
  • Devalued vis-à-vis critical thinking
  • Yet are deeply connected to culture
  • For example, Chinese traditions place high value on context
  • Thought processes are different in high context culture than in a low context culture
1. Is critical thinking already the global paradigm and, if so, how do we incorporate culturally different approaches? How can inquiry be opened up to other perspectives?

2. How can we help our students become aware of culturally different approaches to thinking, teaching, and learning?

3. How do we embed critical thinking into student learning in education abroad? How does it relate to acquiring intercultural competence or more specifically intellectual intercultural competence?

4. Is it necessary for a good global citizen to be a good critical thinker?

5. How do we learn to value different educational approaches that lead to different modes of thinking or different ways to communicate thinking? What is the relationship between traditional pedagogies, learner-centered pedagogies and holistic thinking?

6. How can education abroad enhance the teaching and learning of critical thinking given that it is experiential and engages students dispositions as well as their cognitive processes?

7. Critique notions associated with critical thinking such as objectivity, rationality, criticality, etc.

8. Any other questions you may have...
Concluding Thoughts

• An expanded awareness of the critical thinking paradigm as a cultural construct is an opening to other ways of thinking and reasoning.

• Scholarship indicates that many factors influence cultural and individual thinking processes. We have yet much to learn.

• Current globalization means influence of one culture on others happens at a rapid pace raising questions of whose thinking dominates.

• Value in pedagogies that resist categorization and hierarchizing of different ways of thinking/teaching/learning