

# ENHANCING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING FOR GLOBAL COMPETENCE THROUGH INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER INSTITUTION

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## Abstract

*In the world of work today, mostly the global work competence demand, is directed toward all-round higher institution graduates that is not only have the subject area mastering skill but critical thinking skill that are needed to solve problems in the working organization. Thus, the need to innovative assessment strategy that considers learners in a more holistic way is essential for making rational decisions and addressing problems. It encourages motivation and creativity by taking a more humanistic approach to students' assessment. Enhancing students' critical thinking skills is a function of innovative assessment approach. To enhance critical thinking in higher institution, curriculum designers should incorporate thinking exercise, integrate critical thinking case studies and problem solving activities into the curriculum.*

**Keywords:** Critical Thinking, Global Competence, Innovative Assessment.

## Introduction

As the world continues to face new challenges, the education system is expected to be dynamic in the way that it prepares its graduates for the dynamic world. Higher education institutions primarily aim to develop students who are prepared for the workforce. Students in higher education are required to develop traits that will allow them to become good critical thinkers since the modern workplace requires workers with the ability to handle the dynamism in the workplace. Critical thinking abilities have become essential to being career-ready. Universities have made a point of highlighting the value of critical thinking as a "generic skill" that is essential to most, if not all. Employer's value individuals who can accurately assess a situation and come up with a logical solution, therefore critical thinking abilities are a great asset for an employee. Critical thinking abilities can be applied to describe an issue, determine the effects of decisions, seek solutions, and either decide to change the way something is done or lead a team in the right path. According to Havnes, and Prøitz, (2016), a strong critical thinker can examine and

resolve an issue in a learning environment by using a variety of suitable thinking skills.

Education plays a significant role in preparing students for entry into the labour market upon graduation. This role has many facets, including improving students' ability to think critically and rationally to proffer solutions to identified challenges, generate new and creative ideas, and make informed decisions. Higher institutions in Rivers State as citadel of learning produces graduates yearly primarily for employability purpose. The graduates pass through constructive aligned curriculum which utilizes traditional method of assessment that test the learning outcomes (knowledge and comprehension). It applicability spans from the classroom to early every other aspect of human life. From solving problems in class to facing real-world situations, Critical thinking is a crucial skills that every higher institution student should endeavour to master (Jackson, 2000). Essential skills of thinking is applicable in any case in life that requires students to reflect, analyze, plan and think rationally in everything they are doing whether it is in the field of education, research, management, or legal. In the world of work today, mostly the global work competence demand, is directed toward all-round higher institution graduates that is not only have the subject area mastering skill but critical thinking skill that are needed to solve problems in the working organization. It encourages motivation and creativity by taking a more humanistic approach to students and their abilities. (Jackson, 2000).

However, students in Rivers State need to be taught how to think rather than what to think, emphasis in assessment should be remolded to develop critical thinking abilities among students. Lack of emphasis on critical thinking limits students' ability to develop the skills necessary for global competence, students may struggle to analyze complex global issues from multiple perspectives, evaluate information from diverse sources, develop innovative solutions to real-world problems, communicate effectively across cultural and linguistic boundaries moreover the emphasis on assessment needs to be changed to foster the growth of students' critical thinking skills. It is on this background that this paper examines the innovative assessment as a strategy that higher institutions in Rivers State can adopt to enhance critical thinking skills for global competence for students in the institutions.

### **Critical Thinking**

One of the most commonly discussed higher order skills is critical thinking, which is seen to be essential for making logical decisions and addressing problems (Butler, 2012). Hanna and Silva (2000) stated that assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) initiative counts critical thinking as a key ability when assessing the overall learning outcomes of college students from different countries. Over the past few decades, there has been a significant global revolution in higher education, higher education can offer solutions to several domestic and international problems. This belief is supported by the argument that higher education should be

founded on academic values and principles since it will help people develop both professional and general abilities like critical thinking. (Jackson, 2000). Formal models for teaching and learning have been established, in an effort to increase transparency in higher education for students and other stakeholders, one of which is the encouragement of critical thinking.

Critical thinking, according to Giancarlo and Facione (2001), is a collection of cognitive abilities or skills related to logical analysis and argument evaluation. They further explain that critical thinking as a human cognitive process that involves deliberate, self-regulatory judgment, essential skills such as: Communication and information skills, thinking and problem-solving skills, interpersonal and self-directional skills and collaboration skills.

In view of this, Aizikovitsh-Udi and Amit (2011) pointed out that critical thinking includes assessing the accuracy of information as well as accepting, rejecting, or questioning instances and knowledge from everyday life, it is the capacity to consider what to do with certainty and accept. It includes the ability to engage in rational and independent thought. A person with critical thinking abilities may connect ideas, assess their applicability, build arguments, solve issues, and defend their own beliefs and values. The main prerequisite for critical thinking is a sincere comprehension of how to apply this in formation, it is actually reasonable. Since critical thinking in education is the process of thinking to create decisions from multiple foundations such as evidence, methodologies, criteria, context, conceptualization, and pertinent sources of information, it is a process that is important in real life. In the end, students may use this in the actual world. It is worthy of note that the proficiency and teaching style of the teachers have an impact on how well the students' capacity for critical thought develops (Simpson & Courtney, 2002).

### **Importance of Critical Thinking in Work Situation**

. Butler, (2012), enumerated the importance of critical thinking in working situations as thus:

**Promoting a Teamwork and Collaboration Approach to Problem-Solving:** Any department within a company is a team and effective collaboration is important to its success. When developing a strategy, logically analyze all the team members' input and offer constructive criticism, while also presenting your own view on the situation  
**Self-Evaluating Your Contributions to Company Goals:** If your company is trying to reach a target, show critical thinking by evaluating your contribution and discovering ways to improve your performance. For example, you could list all the ways you are contributing and their impact on the overall progress. After doing that, you can think of prioritizing certain current activities, but also adding new ones that you think will help.

**Practicing Self-Reflection:** Analyzing your own thought process when making certain decisions should help you improve how you process information. This can mean asking yourself why you acted a certain way in a situation or evaluating a

decision to find ways you can improve.

**Making Informed Decisions:** Through time and effort, you can improve your decision-making process by evaluating all available information. It can be tempting to quickly judge a situation and move on to something else, but applying critical thinking will usually result in a more satisfactory outcome. Consider preparing lists of pros and cons, either mentally or on paper, and critically evaluate things from someone else's perspective.

**Using Your Time Wisely:** [Deciding how you use your time](#) is another example of critical thinking. Continually evaluating how you spend your time can help you discover tasks and activities that may change how you prioritize your duties. For example, if you're allocating a lot of time to an activity that has a low return, such as administrative tasks or internal reporting, you might consider re-prioritizing your schedule to spend more time on high-return tasks. Other importance of critical thinking for global competence includes: Prepares students for globalized workforce, enhancing cultural competence and understanding, fosters innovative problem-solving, develops effective communication skills and encourages responsible global citizenship.

### **Global Competence**

Global competence is the skills, values, and behaviours that prepare young people to thrive in a more diverse, interconnected world. In a rapidly changing world, the ability to be engaged citizens and collaborative problem solvers who are ready for the workforce is essential. The need for graduates and staff from higher education institutions to have competencies that go beyond their disciplinary knowledge, according to Kjellgren and Richter (2021), is not a new one. At higher institutions, internationalization is frequently viewed as offering a crucial key to developing many of extra-disciplinary skills needed to not only survive, but to thrive harmoniously in a world like this. Global competence is an emerging key paradigm for this, supporting people to not only live, but thrive in diverse, highly interconnected world. In the spirit of comprehensive internationalization, one strives for an inclusive comprehensive global competence development, as everyone should be able to develop the competencies, and be able to support others in doing the same.

The ability to think globally is known as "global competence," and it enables individuals to flourish in our diverse, highly interrelated world. Global competence can help young graduates: Develop cultural awareness and respectful interactions in increasingly diverse societies, recognize and challenge cultural biases and stereotypes, and facilitate harmonious living in multicultural communities, prepare for the world of work, which increasingly demands individuals who are effective communicators, are open to people from different cultural backgrounds, can build trust in diverse teams and can demonstrate respect for others, especially as technology continues to make it easier to connect on a global scale, capitalize on inherently interconnected digital spaces, question biased media representations, and

express their voice responsibly online, and care about global issues and engage in tackling social, political, economic and environmental challenges.

According Mansilla and Jackson (2012), the follows skills are developed through critical thinking:

**Communication Skills:** In the critical thinking process, effective communication is essential. Success depends on sharing information and ideas with others and demonstrating your ability to think critically. When making a decision at work, being in good contact with your coworkers will help you get the data you need to make the best conclusion. Globally competent students must be able to thoughtfully differentiate among audiences and adapt their behavior accordingly, working together in diverse teams toward a common goal. Globally competent students are able to communicate ideas in the following ways such as: Recognize and express how diverse audiences may perceive different meanings from the same information and how that impacts communication, listen to and communicate effectively with diverse people, using appropriate verbal and nonverbal behavior, languages, and strategies, select and use appropriate technology and media to communicate with diverse audiences, reflect on how effective communication impacts understanding and collaboration in an interdependent world.

**Investigating the world:** Global competent students develop capacities to investigate the world beyond their local environments. These students are able to investigate the world in the following ways: Identify an issue, generate a question, and explain the significance of locally, regionally, and globally focused researchable questions, use a variety of languages and domestic and international sources to identify and weigh relevant evidence in addressing a globally significant researchable question, analyze, integrate, and synthesize evidence to construct coherent responses to globally significant researchable questions, and develop an argument based on compelling evidence that considers multiple perspectives and draws defensible conclusions.

**Recognizing perspectives:** An important step student take toward global competence is recognizing that they hold a particular perspective—one that others may not share. To reach a full understanding of world issues, they must be able to articulate and explain the perspectives of other people, groups, or schools of thought. Globally competent students are able to recognize perspectives in the following ways: Recognize and express their own perspective on situations, events, issues, or phenomena and identify the influences on that perspective, examine perspectives of other people, groups, or schools of thought and identify the influences on those perspectives, explain how cultural interactions influence situations, events, issues, or phenomena, including the development of knowledge, articulate how differential access to knowledge, technology, and resources affects quality of life and perspectives.

**Taking Action:** Globally competent students do more than collect knowledge about the world: they seek to make a difference in the world. Alone or in collaboration,



ethically and creatively, globally competent students envision and weigh options for action based on evidence and insight. They can assess the potential impact of their plans, taking into account varied perspectives and potential consequences for others. And they demonstrate courage in acting and in reflecting on their actions. Globally competent students are able to take action in the following ways: Identify and create opportunities for personal or collaborative action to address situations, events, issues, or phenomena in ways that improve conditions, assess options and plan actions based on evidence and the potential for impact, taking into account previous approaches, varied perspectives and potential consequences, act, personally or collaboratively, in creative and ethical ways to contribute to improvement locally, regionally, or globally and assess the impact of the actions taken, and reflect on their capacity to advocate for and contribute to improvement locally.

**Analytical Thinking:** The most crucial component of critical thinking is the capacity for accurate information analysis. This calls for acquiring data, understanding it, and critically assessing it. Analytical thinking aids in separating material that is relevant to student circumstance from that which is not when studying a work issue.

**Creative Thinking:** Students critical thinking will advance if you can identify specific patterns in data and draw abstract connections between seemingly unrelated pieces of information. You can ingeniously come up with ways to make a work technique or process faster and more effective by critically studying it. Every job, experience level, and sector value creativity as a skill that can be developed through time.

**Open-Mindedness:** A person's capacity to objectively assess particular circumstances is influenced by their prior education and life experiences. You can enhance your critical thinking and general decision-making process by being aware of these biases. For instance, you should let your partner speak and modify your strategy depending on their suggestions if you had planned to organize a meeting in a particular way but they suggested using a different technique.

**Ability to Solve Problems:** Another important talent is the capacity to accurately analyze an issue and work toward developing a solution. For instance, if the waitstaff at your restaurant needs to increase service rates, you might think about giving some of their responsibilities to bussers or other kitchen staff so the servers can bring food more rapidly.

**Asking thoughtful Questions:** Asking the proper questions is a vital step in coming to the right conclusions, both in personal and professional contexts. Thoughtful questions include: 1. Open-Ended Questions: Asking open-ended inquiries might encourage the other person to give you pertinent and important information. These are inquiries that don't accept a straightforward "yes" or "no" response, necessitating further explanation from the questioner, 2. Outcome-Based Questions: Consider asking outcome-based questions when you believe the knowledge and abilities of another person could make your work more productive. You can learn about

someone's critical thinking abilities and gain new perspectives by asking them how they would respond in a certain hypothetical situation, 3. Reflective questions: Asking someone to think on, assess, and describe their thoughts during an experience might help you obtain insight. This can aid in the development of your critical thinking by giving you examples from actual situations, and 4. Structural questions: Asking how something works is a simple technique to gain understanding about something. Any functioning system comes about through a protracted process of trial and error, and being fully aware of the measures that had to be done to achieve success could make you more effective in your own work. (Mansilla & Jackson, 2012)

### **Method of Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking for Global Competence.**

According to Simpson and Courtney (2002), the following methods can enhance students' critical thinking for global competence:

**Active Learning Method:** Active learning method encourages problem solving, students should be presented with real world problem to solve, generate multiple solutions (Brainstorming), analyze complex scenarios and develop solutions, involve fully in debates, encourage critical thinking through structured arguments.

**Reflective journaling Method:** Reflective journaling encourages students to records and reflect on their learning experiences, involve in mind mapping, they need to visualize relationships between ideals, use SWOT analysis which is the strategic planning technique used to identify and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of students and impact performance.

**Collaborative Learning Method:** This method involves students working together as a team to achieve common learning goal or complete tasks. Students discuss topics in a small group, students learn from each other's expertise, divide complex topics into smaller group tasks (Jigsaw method) and work in pair to solve problems (Think-pair-share)

**Open-Ended Questions Method:** Encourage exploration and justification of ideas, use questions that prompt analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

**Real-world Applications Method:** This method encompasses service- learning projects, connecting academic concepts to community needs, encourages collaboration on authentic projects, simulation, role play and mimic real-world scenarios

**Technology Integration Method:** This method incorporated virtual escape rooms that has to deal with solving problems immersive environments. Online forums facilitate global discussion, critical thinking also include educational game that develop critical thinking through gameplay.

**Feedback and Reflection Method:** Regular feedback guide students' critical thinking development, self-assessment that encourages reflection on learning processes and peer review that develop critical evaluation skills.

**Curriculum Design Method:** This method incorporate diverse perspective and interdisciplinary approaches, it also encourages exploration of complex, ambiguous issues, and embed critical thinking skills into learning objectives. By incorporating these methods, educators can enhance critical skills in students, preparing them for innovative assessment and real –world challenges.

### **Innovative Assessment**

Zacharis, (2010), state that assessment is a systemic procedure or tools educators use to measure, and evaluate student's performance, it aids in the gathering of information about students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills and most cases help in raising students' performance. He further states that assessment is the process of documenting knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs, usually in measurable terms.. The goal of assessment is to make improvements, as opposed to simply being judged. In an educational context, assessment is the process of describing, collecting, recording, scoring, and interpreting information about learning. Assessment can also be referred to as the procedure of gathering and analyzing data from many sources, some or all of which may include tests, in order to identify and record students' strengths and weaknesses, schedule lessons, and improve instruction. Patrick, and Uvietesivw (2018), pointed out that teachers and students can make conclusions from the data collected during assessment and take appropriate action. Such acts may assist in bringing about the essential changes in teaching and learning, or they may merely paint a picture of students' abilities or accomplishments throughout time. To Ghaicha (2016), assessment is the process by which [faculty] instructors evaluate their students' progress by gathering, analyzing, synthesizing, and interpreting pertinent data about a specific object of interest in their performance under controlled circumstances in relation to the curriculum objectives established for their levels, and in accordance with the procedures that are systematic and substantively grounded.. Assessment is crucial to the learning and motivation processes. The types of assessment tasks that we assign to our students influence how they approach learning tasks and the study habits that they adopt.

In higher institutions in Rivers State, traditional method of assessment dominates the procedure of ascertaining student outcome and this limits student development of critical thinking capability. Students concentrates in memorizing and understanding of subject learning outcome. Koh (2017) acknowledged that the structure of the item format in traditional testing restricts the measurement of higher-order thinking abilities and other crucial 21st-century characteristics. It is worthy of note according to Weurlander et al. (2012) that traditional method of assessment encourages students to study and inform them of their knowledge and areas that



require more study. As a result, it can serve as a learning tool, enhancing both the learning process and its results. Simonson et al. (2000) observed that traditional or conventional assessments, put a lot of emphasis on students' capacity to memorize and recall information, which is at a lower level of Bloom's Taxonomy. Psychometrically speaking, higher-level learning outcomes, such critical thinking cannot be measured using the conventional assessment methods because they are too subjective. One of the most crucial abilities thought necessary for college graduates to become productive members of the global workforce is critical thinking which a form of innovative assessment is.

Innovative methods of assessment can assist students in showcasing abilities for society, employment, and education. Any approach or method of evaluation that introduces something new or tries to accomplish something different in a setting of education can be deemed innovative (McDowell, 2002). Innovative assessment tools and strategies have the potential to shape the quality of learning process without ignoring the needs of the learner in an effort to provide easily accessible and comparable results for external stakeholders (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents, and employers). This shift away from single test-scores towards a descriptive assessment based on a range of abilities and outcomes. According to Hannan and Silver (2000), innovation in higher education is typically understood to indicate a purposeful or planned process of bringing change that is intended to make improvements or address an issue, but does not necessarily succeed in doing so. A person, a course department, an organization, or higher education as a whole may be unfamiliar with these developments. Increasingly innovative forms of assessment are being introduced by universities as a substitute for traditional written essays, one of such form of assessment is critical thinking skill assessment.

### **Higher institution Students' Critical Thinking through Innovative Assessment**

Improving students' critical thinking abilities in higher education is a top focus in these discussions. When it comes to preparing students for entry into the workforce after graduation, education is crucial. This job has numerous elements, including enhancing students' capacity for rational and critical thought to give answers to problems that have been discovered, produce fresh and imaginative ideas, and make informed decisions. Modern society is demanding and complex yet many of our assessments are magnificently basic in their nature. (Biggs & Tang. 2011).advocating a more sophisticated and aligned use of assessment to support high-level learning, much of our assessment still focuses on testing knowledge and comprehension and ignores the challenge of development. It is time we recognized the changing nature of society and acknowledged that quality is a more complex concept than traditional assessment criteria suggest, that quality cannot be reduced to a set of easily quantified learning outcomes.

External pressures on higher education institutions for accountability and for responsiveness to changing employment conditions, are leading to many

innovations in instruction in general and in assessment in particular. The objective of the curriculum that is constructively aligned is to assist the learner in gathering knowledge about the subject. The learner is traditionally assessed using a range of assessment approaches, such as assignments, exams, presentations, or a written essay, among others, to see how well they comprehend the subject. Because it has numerous facets, the concept of critical thinking presents many difficulties for individuals who want to create accurate and reliable assessments. Learning and assessment is integrated into a curriculum that is productively aligned for students to: have clearly defined learning outcomes, demonstrate teaching and learning activities and methods that lead to the achievement of the defined learning outcomes, objectively assess what learners have learned against the outcomes, and enable students arriving at a grade based upon standardized assessment.

Braun, Shavelson, Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia and Borowiec (2020) pointed out that critical thinking generally comprises the following mental processes: identifying, evaluating, and analyzing a problem; interpreting information; synthesizing evidence; and reporting a conclusion. Importantly, Oser and Biedermann (2020) assert that there are three ways in which critical thinking can be expressed which are:

**Critical Analysis:** Both conceptual and procedural analytical knowledge (deduction, inclusion, etc.) are necessary for critical analysis.

**Critical Reflection:** This is general abilities that are required of every responsible member of a society. It is a fundamental attitude that must be taken into account if (new) information is questioned as to whether it is genuine or incorrect, reliable or not, moral or immoral, etc.). In order to engage in critical reflection, one must not only use analytical reasoning but also take into account the political, social, and other ramifications of one's decisions. Analyzing the potential motivations of the many actors involved in the situation of interest also requires this.

**Critical Alertness:** This is the ability to critically analyze one's own and others' reasons, to be aware and proactive in identifying and addressing potential problems, risks or opportunities. Students needs to be mindful, curious, and open to new information, perspective and ideas.

## **Conclusion**

Enhancing students' critical thinking for global competence through innovative assessment is a vital step towards preparing students for success in an increasingly interconnected world. By integrating critical thinking skills into existing curricula and utilizing innovative assessment methods, students can focus on what they need to know based on the curriculum content and less on how they apply their knowledge, skills and attitudes to real-world environment which are the demand of global competence. Institutions of higher learning are expected to focus more on a

competency-based curriculum and shift from traditional assessment to innovative assessment that will provoke critical thinking among graduates of higher institutions and made them ready for any kind of global competence and employability skills. Innovative assessment demonstrates competences in preparation for future employment.

### **Suggestions**

For the purpose of creating lifelong learners, who can cogitate critically and innovatively, enhancing student's critical thinking is vital. Because of this:

1. Curriculum designers should integrate thinking exercise, critical thinking case studies and problem solving activities into the curriculum.
2. Establish mentorship programmes that pair students with industry professionals or faculty members, promoting critical thinking and professional development.
3. Encourage interdisciplinary methods to learning, joining subjects like philosophy, psychology and sociology to foster critical thinking
4. Lecturers should use real word examples and scenarios to illustrate complex problems, boosting students to think critically about solutions
5. Engage active learning techniques such as debates, discussion, and role playing to engage students and promote critical thinking.
6. Use Socratic Method, asking open-ended questions to encourage critical thinking and problem solving.
7. Implement a flipped classroom approach, where students learn basic concepts at home and encourage in critical thinking activities in class.
8. Assignment of group projects and presentation that require students to work together, share ideas and think critically.
9. Encourage peer review and feedback, allowing students to learn from each other and develop their critical thinking skills.

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