

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/on-critical-thinking-and-content-knowledge/>

This video is a lengthy exploration of critical thinking, its definitions, and the arguments surrounding its teachability in the context of cognitive load theory. The speaker clarifies that critical thinking is not synonymous with intelligence, expertise, or education level, and argues it should be defined by the quality of thought and thinking processes. They challenge the view from cognitive load theory, which asserts that critical thinking is biologically primary and cannot be taught, emphasizing evidence that shows critical thinking skills can indeed be developed through explicit teaching.

The speaker critiques cognitive load theory for its narrow focus primarily on working memory and instructional design, arguing this approach overlooks the necessity of inquiry, character development, and the agency of students in their learning processes. They argue that cognitive load theory's claims regarding the inability to teach critical thinking are problematic due to the lack of a clear definition of what critical thinking entails. Moreover, they emphasize that students must engage actively in learning, developing resilience, tolerance for ambiguity, and effective inquiry skills to succeed in a complex, uncertain world.

The speaker cites examples like the Philosophy for Children movement, which shows significant cognitive gains through explicit instruction in critical thinking. They call for a broader consideration of critical thinking that incorporates the complexities of human cognition and the importance of fostering an environment where students can develop their thinking skills and agency, distancing from the limitations of cognitive load theory's assumptions. The speaker concludes that while the theory provides some useful insights, its strong claims regarding critical thinking could ultimately do more harm than good in education.