Chapter 12
Exploring the Delphi Report's Critical Thinking Framework for Military School Educationists

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ABSTRACT

This chapter advances the argument that military colleges and universities should infuse and implement critical thinking in learning experiences to explore and develop values, character traits, and leadership skills in students (cadets). The chapter first surveys the literature concerning critical thinking, drawing from historical, philosophical, psychological, and educational evidence. The chapter then elucidates the Delphi Report's findings about CT and contends that military school educationists use the report as a guide for instructional strategies and educational experiences with students (cadets). By embracing the fundamentals of critical thinking through several perspectives and leveraging the elements of CT identified in the Delphi Report, military colleges and universities can initiate a renewed interest in leveraging the advantages of CT in their courses, offering students opportunities to become capable officers, productive citizens, and moral people.

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking (hereafter CT) skills and outcomes must be taught in higher education (Stassen, Herrington, and Henderson, 2011). Davies and Barnett (2015) indicated: "Unless efforts to promote criticality are present in the design of curricula, especially in teaching and in the teacher-student relationship, we cannot say we are espousing the cause of genuine higher education" (p.27). Although research suggests the spirit of CT and its use has been dismal at college campuses across the United States, Paul (2004) argued there was still universal agreement among faculty that CT was the most important goal of higher education.

There are several reasons for the teaching of CT in college and university classrooms. CT reinforces students' discernments of the world around them and the decisions and judgments they make (Paul,

2004). CT also assists students with self-regulation and conflict resolution (Behar-Horenstein and Niu, 2011). From a utility-oriented standpoint, the demands of the global economy require students, as future employees, to possess a set of skills, to include CT (Franco and Vieira, 2019). There has also been discussion on how CT impacts citizenship and character formation (Behar-Horenstein and Niu, 2011). According to Delibovi (2018), CT development begins based on the character of the person willing to follow the rigorous requirements of CT. Hence, there is a symbiotic relationship between the two where "critical thought and character work together in an ascending spiral that reinforces both" (p. 21). Lastly, looking at higher education as a non-utilitarian endeavor, using the intellect for thoughtful investigations leads to learning as an end in itself and to an enlightened mind (Brann, 1999).

Military colleges and universities – a subset of higher educational institutions - are no less responsible for inculcating critical thinking practice and dispositions in their students (cadets). Indeed, one of the traditional goals of military colleges and universities is to educate and train future military leaders, who must possess critical thinking skills (Guillot, 2004). According to the U.S. Army's ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, a key component of leadership is mental agility which comprises critical thinking, defined as "purposeful and helps finds facts, challenge assumptions, solve problems, and make decisions" (p. 4-1). Closely associated with mental agility is flexibility and adaptability. The United States Armed Forces must recognize the need for their leaders to be flexible and open-minded to be able to adapt due to the fluid, changing, and chaotic nature of the environments with which they work (Thomas, 2009). Based on these realities, military colleges and universities must view CT as a necessary educational objective and common practice in educational contexts.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical Development, Issues, Perspectives

The application of critical thinking in higher education is unfortunately hampered by a lack of consensus on its definition (McPeck, 2016). As with topics like 'learning,' and 'creativity,' people affirm critical thinking (hereafter CT) without reflecting deeply on its definitions, standards, or qualities. McPeck (1981) claimed:

Being in favor of critical thinking in our schools is thus a bit like favouring freedom, justice or a clean environment: it meets with general approval from the outset. But as with those other concepts, it is not at all clear that people mean the same thing by critical thinking, nor that they would all continue to approve of it if they did agree about what it meant (n.p.).

As with these and other topics of import, it befits scholar-practitioners in the education field, and for the purposes of this chapter, military school educationists, to seek a clear definition and conceptual framework concerning CT. This chapter ultimately endorses the Delphi Report's framework as presented by Facione (1990) and recommends its implementation in military college and university classrooms. Before fully exploring possibilities the Delphi Report's CT framework can have at military schools, this chapter first presents the literature concerning CT, identifying the perspectives scholars in philosophy, psychology, and education have advanced. Second, the chapter explicates the Delphi Report, including the report's methodology, definition of CT, and the importance of not only CT skills, but dispositions

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