CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS FOR ISLAMIC EDUCATION TEACHERS: A STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the critical thinking skills of Islamic education's teachers in Jordan and to determine the impact of gender, experience and scientific qualifications on the critical thinking skills of teachers. The Sample of the study consists of 112 Islamic Education's teachers who responded to a valid and reliable questionnaire consists of 24 items with three substitutes. The results of the study shows that teacher's level of critical thinking skills are high and there are no significant differences related to gender variable, but there are significant differences related to experience and scientific qualifications variables. The researchers' recommendations for the field of the study may prove useful in enhancing critical thinking skills.

Key words: skills, critical thinking, Islamic education teachers

1. INTRODUCTION

Education systems in most world countries are becoming increasingly interested in developing students’ higher mental processes including, critical thinking, creative thinking, scientific thinking and problem solving. Nowadays, there is a growing consensus among educators and cognitive psychologists for the need to develop critical thinking skills among students. Developing this kind of thinking has become very essential for most educational policies in the world and a major goal that curriculum are looking forward to achieve (kneedler, 1986; Marazano et al, 1988).

Critical thinking is becoming an educational need, this is due to many considerations; including, developing students’ critical thinking leads to more understanding of the content knowledge they learn. That is because learning is basically a process of thinking, and encouraging more thinking in classrooms teaching would help changing the learning process from acquiring knowledge to a mental activity which leads to better mastery of knowledge content (Norrie’s, 1985). This not only helps students to meet subject requirements that should be taught and learned, but also provides them with methods of acquiring the logical, mental and creative ideas (Fisher, 1991).

According to Beyer, as stated in (Ennis, 1987), the term critical thinking is one of the most complicated terms of thinking to use and understand. Some people think that the term is used for negative intuitions and searching for errors and mistakes of people. Bayer explained that the term critical thinking for others means all of the thinking processes, starting with decision-making, passing through the analysis of relations between parts and the whole. Another scholar mentioned that “critical thinking is based on logical reasoning, avoiding errors and incorrect beliefs” (Brown & Brown, 1971, p.731). Nickerson and his colleagues decided that critical thinking provides the individual with the ability to make a good choice, to compare between things and to evaluate the alternatives. Critical thinking skills also include sub-skills including, the ability to differentiate between facts and opinions, to reach valid conclusions, to reach to right generalizations and principles, to detect the relationship between cause and effect, to make decisions, to discover wrong explanations, to diagnose bias and objectivity in historical texts and to show strong argument.

Previous studies focused on critical thinking because of its importance in developing the individual and society. A study by Nazal (2003) aimed to detect the level of the contribution of a sample of (80) Islamic education teachers and social studies teachers in the development of critical thinking skills for students in middle school in Dubai.

The results showed a low level of the contribution in the development of critical thinking for their students, also it showed that there are no differences in statistically significant attributable to course, gender and educational qualification. Also in Al- Hamdi study (2004) which aimed to know the reality for practicing the history teachers of critical thinking skills and creativity in their schools in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of teachers and headmasters. The results showed that there were differences between teachers who practice critical thinking skills in their classes and the acceptable educational level and for estimates of teachers (educationally the acceptable level is 85%). As for the headmasters estimated there were differences between teachers’ practice of thinking skills only and whole skills, and the level which is educationally accepted. As there were no differences in the estimates for each of the headmasters attributed to experience and qualification.
Al-Shunaikat study (2005) aimed to reveal the Islamic education teachers knowledge who teach creative thinking skills for students in Upper primary stage in Jordan. The study sample consisted of (60) teachers teaching Islamic education for students in Upper primary stage in Jordan. The results of the study showed the low value of the arithmetic averages of the level of knowledge and tribal practices of teachers and the lack of statistical differences in the level of knowledge and dimensional practices due to the sex variable. Al-Snafi study (2007), which aimed to reveal the contribution of social studies books and teachers in developing critical thinking skills and creativity in Kuwait. The study showed low contribution of social education teachers in the development of critical thinking skills and creative thinking, the rate of the first is 5.13% and the second is 4.55% which is low percentage in total, this showed clear weakness of the preparation and training of social studies teachers to do their role in teaching thinking skills which still focus on teaching the knowledge of material in their domain

AL Azmi study (2008), which aimed to indicate the role of teachers of Islamic education in the development of critical thinking skills for students of the intermediate stage from the perspective of supervisors in the State of Kuwait with a sample of (44) supervisors. The results showed that the level of teachers of Islamic education roles in the development of critical thinking skills for students from the perspective of supervisors in Kuwait was medium.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers in the current study benefit from previous studies in selecting the topic and start where others have ended, as the previous studies reviewing the researchers to the methodology of the study by access the methodology of similar studies. To the best knowledge of researchers, studies that addressed the critical thinking skills in Jordan are rather limited. Therefore, the primary purposes of this study are to determine the level of critical thinking skills for Islamic education teachers in Jordan. Primarily, the following research question is formulated to address the primary purpose of the study:

**To what extent do teachers of Islamic education in Madaba Directorate of Education possess critical thinking skills from their point of view? More specifically, the current study is trying to answer the following questions:**

Definitions of Terms

**Critical thinking:** a type of systematic reflective thinking which lead to deep analysis and examine data and take decisions based on objective evidence.

**Islamic education teachers:** teachers who teach Islamic education for all stages and classes, except teachers who teach Islamic education for elementary classes or teachers with classroom teachers’ major.

2. METHOD AND PROCEDURES

Participants

Participants of the currents study were all Islamic education teachers in the Madaba Directorate of Education during the academic year 2011/2012. The number of participants was 112 teachers (52 male / 60 female).

Instrument

The researchers developed a questionnaire to assess Islamic Education teachers’ competencies in critical thinking, according to the following steps:

1 - Identify teachers’ competencies in critical thinking based on literature of the field.
2 - Prepare the items of the questionnaire to be: clear, expressive, short, and direct so that each item contains one idea and includes most of critical thinking skills.
3 – The questionnaire in its initial form consisted of 30 items, beside each item three gradual alternatives from 1 to 3. While 1 reflects low level of competency, 2 medium level of competency, and 3 reflects higher level of competency.
4 – The questionnaire on its initial form was given to 15 professors from the Hashemite University and Al-Balqa Applied University for face validity. Based on their comments some items were deleted, others were merged as they reflect one idea, and some wording was changed to be clear. After these amendments the questionnaire consisted of 24 items.

Data analysis

To answer the question of the study, the following data analysis method was used: averages and standard deviations for teachers’ responses on the questionnaire.

Reliability of the study tool:

Reliability was calculated by using the method of testing and re-testing (test – retest) and through the application of the questionnaire on an exploratory sample consists of (23) teachers of Islamic education outside the community of the study. Then they applied the same questionnaire on the same sample within three weeks between the two applications, then calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient it was (0.88), and Stability coefficient was calculated according to the equation of internal consistency (Cronbach alpha), and the value of Stability coefficient was (0.93). These values were considered appropriate for the purposes of the study. For the purposes of the current study, the researchers calculated the extent to which teachers of Islamic education for critical thinking skills as follows:

Paragraph, which the arithmetic average ranges between (2.36 to 3.00) means that the extent to which teachers of Islamic education for critical thinking skills is large. Paragraph, which the arithmetic average ranges between (1.68 to 2.35) means that the extent to which teachers of Islamic education for critical thinking skills is

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medium. Paragraph, which the arithmetic average ranges between (1.00 to 1.67) means that the extent to which teachers of Islamic education for critical thinking skills is law.

3. RESULTS

Table 1. Arithmetic means, standard deviations, ranking, which teachers estimate about the skills of critical thinking they have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>criteria</th>
<th>SMA</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>ranking</th>
<th>The acquisition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Distinguishes between facts and opinions</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Distinguishes between the true sources of information from other sources</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Distinguishes between authentic and unauthentic version</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Analyzes the attitudes and information</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Identifies evidence and mysterious arguments</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Distinguish between assumptions and postulates which the text contained.</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Determine bias in the texts and given data</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Identifies the including inaccuracies</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Identifies inconsistencies in the process of inference from the introductions</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Determines the degree of strength of proofs or claims</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Distinguishes between critical thinking and problem-solving</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Judges according to the topic</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Distinguishes between results which supported by facts and which based on emotions</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Makes decisions or abandoned them according to the available evidences</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Stops going into things because of the lack of information</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Focuses equally on all aspects of the critical issue.</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Determines the reasons and alternatives</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Explains the results according to the available data</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Accepts others thoughts and opinions</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Predicts the effects of decision-making on the given data</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The lesson plans of teachers contains planning to teach critical thinking skills for students</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>The assessment tools include the measurements of the students critical thinking skills</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Distinguish between critical thinking and cognitive levels of Bloom (analysis, synthesis and evaluation)</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in table (1) shows that the estimates of the extent to which the skills of critical thinking teachers have on the resolution came within the whole Questionnaire and got a large extent on the arithmetic mean (2.41) and standard deviation (0.27).

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the first question answers which concerning the extent of having teachers of Islamic education for critical thinking skills in the directorate of education in Madaba, came in the long run with arithmetic mean (2.41) and standard deviation (0.27) Perhaps this is due to the effectiveness of training programs, educational lectures and courses, specialized workshops, and intensive follow-up for teachers in classrooms by the school departments and supervisors that accompanied the development of curriculum in 2006.

And it explained the differences between the results of this study and the studies which conducted in Jordan this year, including Al-Sheniqat study (2005) and demonstrate the success of The Ministry of education programs to cope with global interest in developing thinking skills programs. Based on table (1) paragraph number (20) (Accept the thoughts and opinions of others) came first and it was not surprising that Islam urges the need to
accept others. And paragraph (1) (Distinguish between facts and opinions) came in the second, this result related to the logical nature of Islamic education and the preparation of teachers, which is based on evidence and proof. While paragraph (17) (Focuses equally on all aspects of the critical issue.) came last. And perhaps the reason for this is that the teachers of Islamic education are focusing on the aspects of the critical issue from the most important to the least important things and is not paying all aspects of the situation the same degree. Finally, paragraphs (12 and 24) (Distinguishes between critical thinking and problem-solving, Distinguish between critical thinking and cognitive levels of Bloom (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) came before the last, perhaps this is due to the overlap of some problem-solving skills and higher levels of Bloom Taxonomy especially (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) with the critical thinking skills.

Further more, most studies programs focus on the development of thinking skills for students both within their courses or through their learning and the Islamic studies require thinking skills. When examining Islamic knowledge we need to consider the evidence, analyze, make judgments and take decisions. These skills grow and increase with the demand of Islamic knowledge. And this result is consistent with the results of (Al-Azmi 2008) also differ with the results of (Nazal 2003) and (Al-Hamdi 2004) studies.

Most of these studies had negative results on all the variables.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results which were revealed by the researchers, they recommended the following:

1. Conduct similar studies dealing with detection efficiencies of Islamic education teachers in other thinking skills
2. Expand the study community and districts to include different educational directorates in the Kingdom
3. Conduct studies compared with some neighboring Arab countries to detect the level of preparation and training those teachers of Islamic education use in teaching thinking skills.

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