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CRITICAL THINKING IN CONTEMPORARY BUSINESS EDUCATION: PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

[1]Tomas Saulius
Department of Physical and Social Education
Lithuanian Sports University
Sporto str. 6, Kaunas
Lithuania
Tel: +370 37 20 90 50
E-mail: tomas.saulius@lsu.lt

[2]Dovile Valanciene
Affiliation 1:
Institute of Sport Science and Innovations;
Lithuanian Sports University
Sporto str. 6, Kaunas
Lithuania
E-mail:dovile.valanciene@lsu.lt

Affiliation 2:
Department of Public Law
Faculty of Law
Vilnius University,
Saulėtekio al. 9, LT-10222 Vilnius
Lithuania
E-mail: dovile.valanciene@tf.vu.lt

[3]Svitlana Bilan
Faculty of Management
Rzeszow University of Technology
al. Powstańców Warszawy 12
35-959, Rzeszów
Poland
E-mail: s.bilan@prz.edu.pl

[1]Tomas Saulius is a doctor of Humanities (Philosophy), an associate professor at the Department of Physical and Social Education, Lithuanian Sports University. The main research interest areas are epistemology, formal and informal logic, philosophy of science, history of philosophy.

[2]Dovile Valanciene is a Doctor of Social Sciences (law), a researcher at the Institute of Sport Science and Innovations, an associate professor at the Department of Sports and Tourism Management, Lithuanian Sports University; a lecturer at the Department of Public Law, Faculty of Law, Vilnius University. The main research areas are the paradigm of complex systems, the theory of law, history of law, sports law, philosophy of science, philosophy of law, social sciences and neuroscience, decision-making and neuroscience.

[3]Svitlana Bilan doctor of Social Science, associated professor at Rzeszow University of Technology, Faculty of Management. Her main areas of research are business economics and management, innovation, sustainable development and sustainability assessment in the fields of education, business and economics.

ABSTRACT. *In the informational era, "critical thinking" names something of unquestionable value both for meaningful education and competitiveness in the labour market. It is thought to be a "virtue" of postmodern man, an essential prerequisite for effective action in personal, professional and social life.*

However, from the theoretical point of view, the concept of "critical thinking" is far from being clear and distinct, and from the perspective of educational practice, it is far from providing of unambiguous waymarks as to content and methods of classroom tasks. In general, the fact that critical thinking concept is being widely applied in different discourses does not much contribute to our understanding of what specifically one adds to "thinking" when one calls it "critical". The aim of the research is to discuss the following question: What conception of critical thinking and what practical implications of this conception are the most relevant in business education settings? Research method: a philosophical conceptual analysis. The main conclusions are the following: First, there are three main theoretical approaches to critical thinking – "skill-oriented perspective", "person-oriented perspective", and "social norms-perspective", and all of them are based on the general idea of "reflectivity" which is emphasized in the philosophy of J. Dewey. Second, theoreticians and educators tend to narrow the concept of critical thinking to "argument analysis" which leads to the tendency to bind "critical thinking training" to textbook "patterns of argumentation" and artificial examples. Third, in business education settings the "social norms-oriented perspective" of critical thinking is the most adequate as it helps to avoid a common error of confusing factual and normative aspects in the definition of educational tasks.

KEYWORDS: critical thinking, argumentation, business education.

JEL classification: B5, F0.

Introduction

In contemporary Western culture, the value of critical thinking is beyond any doubt. Key terms may vary, but the general idea behind them presumably remains the same: a particular set of human cognitive powers, unless they are unnourished or misapplied, can positively change individual lives and entire environments, make "our lives worth living", remembering Socrates's famous dictum. These powers appear to be essential for sophisticated existence in the "informational era". *Vilnius declaration - Horizons for Social Sciences and Humanities* (2013) expresses a consensus among representatives of academic, business and political institutions that "fostering the reflective capacity of society is crucial for sustaining a vital democracy". This declaration manifests not only good intentions of European policy-makers but mundane realia in higher education and labour markets which, of course, are interdependent. Robertas Dargis (2014), president of LPK (Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists), stresses that what employers desiderate in graduates of Lithuanian universities is namely "ability to make decisions, to think analytically". For example, in the *Procter & Gamble,* it is a routine practice to test job applicants' "reasoning skills" (*Global Reasoning Test. Practice Test,* 2008). However, the fact that an idea has acquired some currency in a particular society and its cultural media does not imply that it is clearly and distinctly understood or uncontroversially defined. Once one notices that numerous expressions denoting different cognitive capacities and processes, including "thinking", of course, are theoretically loaded concepts, the question "What is critical thinking, after all?" does not seem

trivial (Mulnix, 2010; Moore, 2011; Weissberg, 2013; Davies, Barnett, 2015). Longmore *et al.* (2018) state that business education must shift from a traditional teaching paradigm toward a transformative teaching and learning model that demonstrates deep learning and critical reflection of learners who meet the 21st century innovation challenge (Hvolkova *et al.,* 2019; Changwong *et al.,* 2018).

Paper aims at the clearance of conceptual muddle created by frequent usage and, in certain respects, an abuse of the concept of critical thinking. First of all, we will discuss various attempts to define "critical thinking" in the relevant academic literature, noting the most dangerous defects of traditional definitions and trying to find their common theoretical denominator. Then we will turn to the issue of the practical application of the concept in the contexts of higher education. The second part of our paper seeks to address the following question: What exactly is one doing while one is *learning* to be a critical thinker? Finally, in the third part of the paper, we will contextualize our findings within the theory and practice of contemporary business education. The philosophical method of conceptual analysis is being applied in the paper, as our intention is "to rectify the logical geography" of an abstract (in a sense, speculative) notion.

1. Conceptions of Critical Thinking

From the very beginning of the Western philosophical tradition, "thinking", "understanding", "knowing", "reason", "mind" and their synonyms were being used as the markers of peculiar and, in some important respects, mysterious "human nature". Human beings transcend material (physical, biological) world insofar they are "thinking beasts". On the other hand, some humans are more professed in thinking that their kinsmen and thus deserve the honourable title of the "wise", or at least that of the "seeker of wisdom" (i.e. "philosopher"). For example, anthropologist W. G. Sumner talks of "the critical habit of thought" in this very broad sense (see Bensley, 2011). Does the concept of critical thinking function as a new way to make traditional distinctions (general oppositions underlying every *Weltanschauung*)? Or does it convey any specific educationally relevant ideas?

In the 1970s the new interdisciplinary movement took a shape – *The Critical Thinking Movement*, as it was labelled in the retrospective. It had three "waves", but, if we follow Paul (1997) rightly, these differ among themselves in emphasis, not conceptual content. In the first wave, the emphasis was laid on "the theory of logic, argumentation, and reasoning"; the second one (dating form roughly 1980) represented "superficial" character of research, "comprehensiveness without rigor", as researchers (mostly cognitive psychologists) tried to move emphasis "outside the tradition of logic and rhetoric"; finally, the third wave (dating from 1990) raised as an attempt to overcome shortcomings of the preceding research, however, for Paul it is something in its infancy (it is "only just now beginning to emerge"). In 1990 the so-called *The Delphi Report* (Facione, 1990) was issued referring the essential points agreed upon in the interdisciplinary perspective (among philosophers, representatives of social and physical sciences). The result was "an ideal" defined rather eclectically with the reservation that "no person is fully adept at all the skills and sub-skills the experts found to be central to CT [critical thinking]" (Facione, 1990, p.3). According to the *Report*, the key characteristics of critical thinking are the following:

(a) it is independent of cultural biases and other in-group limitations;

(b) it ranges over the broad specter of cognitive *skills* (the "core skills" are interpretation, analysis, evaluation inference, explanation, self-regulation), *sub-skill*s (e.g. interpretation encompasses categorization, decoding significance, clarifying meaning) and

dispositions (e.g. inquisitiveness with regard to a wide range of issues, concern to become and remain generally well-informed);

(c) it is an educational desideratum, a substantial outcome of the effective teaching and "meaningful learning" (remembering the appealing concept of Ausubel).

Thus explicated, the notion of critical thinking is no more than a rhetorical device, a gravity centre of some kind of "preaching", self-legitimizing normative discourse (McPeck, 2017). If in the contemporary academic lexicon "critical thinking" is almost all-encompassing, don't we unconsciously drift back to Spearman's "central cognitive function" ("g-factor") and the immediate issue of multiplicity of human intelligence? (Willingham, 2008). The same question applies to Ennis' (1991) famous "a streamlined conception of critical thinking". In terms of this model, the main point is a vital need to make a decision in a "problem-solving context". In principle accordance with *The Delphi Report*, Ennis scrupulously defines a set of "the ideal critical thinker's" dispositions and abilities, i.e. the main factors determining the choice of premises (from the heterogeneous mass of available information) and inference procedures (which are of three types: deduction, induction and value judging) (Ennis, 1991). The model is supplemented with "working definition" which became highly influential: 'critical thinking' means reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (Ennis, 1991, p.8; Ennis, 1996; Kuhn, 2015). Without any corrections, it is further preserved as "an accurate definition" (Ennis, 2016; 2013). It may be conceded that by adding "critical" to the notion of "thinking" we narrow it to "conscious mode of operation" - we eliminate daydreaming and free (spontaneous) association of ideas. As Halpern states, the concept means "thinking that is purposeful, reasoned, and goal-directed" (Halpern, 2014, p.8). But how does it contrast with *"intelligence"*? Once one notices that the latter is conventionally defined as an ability "to correctly utilize thought and reason" (APA, 2015, p.548), this question poses a difficulty to the proponents of critical thinking and demands a better explanation of their central idea. Another important issue to consider: Can "reasonable reflective thinking" be inconclusive, i.e. leave thinker undecided "what to believe or do"? Does the idea of critical thinking is compatible with Socrates' principle "I know that I don't know" or sceptics' famous idea of *epochē*, "withholding from judgment"? If works of Plato and other ancient philosophers do not manifest the very thing we call "critical thinking", what on earth else can it be (Coney, 2015; Chaffee, 2012)? The claim that critical thinker has positive answers to all the questions he confronts in different "problem-solving contexts", strikes us not only as intuitively improbable, but even utterly unreasonable. Therefore, one may suspect that Ennis' definition is too vague in important respects (Davis, 2013; Frazier, 2015; Larsson, 2017).

Paradoxically enough, critical thinking is unanimously conceived as a "self-consciousness" of the Western civilization (e.g. Novella, 2012; Sia, Jose, 2019), however, it strongly resists the theoretical conceptualization. In fact, "with each new appearance, critical thinking becomes less, rather than more, clearly defined" (Capossela, 1998, p.1; Bensley, 2011; Moore, 2011; 2013). Unless one is ready to abandon the concept of critical thinking, there are various strategies to maintain it alive at least in the educational discourses. It can be approached from different perspectives, i.e. adopting either the "skills view" or the "skills-and-judgements view", or the "skills-plus-dispositions view" (Davis, 2013; Davies, Barnett, 2015). The main problem with this "skills-based" approach is that it is usually confined to *argumentation* skills that are vital in polemical contexts. Critical thinking is essentially arguing with others or with oneself (e.g. Andrews, 2010; Lau, 2011). From the epistemological perspective, it is important that not all problems we deal with in our lives are issues concerning the justification of knowledge-claims (Saulius, 2016). On the other hand,

psychological researches make it evident that cognitive skills are "very much dependent on domain knowledge and practice" (Willingham, 2008, p.22). A child can easily "get the point" and an adult can fail to do this in the cases where the fist possesses relevant contextual information and the second – does not. Most importantly, even in the professional spheres (e.g. scientific research), one must ground one's judgments and decisions not only on explicit or explicatable premises but also on "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi, 2009; Nguyen, 2018). This aspect is masterfully described in M. Gladwell's bestseller *Blink* (2005). Thus, shifting different "skill-based" definitional tactics neither makes the concept of critical thinking clearer nor enriches educational discourse with theoretically and practically valuable insights.

Of course, the "skill-based" conception of critical thinking fits quite nicely the framework of "Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives", but it is hard to maintain this conception coherently. Paul, Elder (2002) emphasize that one is thinking critically whenever one is "skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them" (p.15). But it becomes obscure what they mean by "skillfully" as authors swiftly refocus their attention to "traits of the disciplined mind" (or "intellectual habits", or "intellectual 'virtues'"), viz. "intellectual autonomy", "intellectual empathy", "intellectual confidence in reason" etc. (Paul, Elder, 2002). They move even further beyond "skill-based" conception claiming that "true excellence in thinking is not simply the result of isolated intellectual skills" (p.35), that critical thinking is not "something you add onto everything else" (p.12). In short, learning to think critically is something of a radically different kind than learning to ride a bicycle. Things become even more complicated when Elder and Paul (2013) claim that critical thinking can considerably improve in 30-days training period. Of course, one can learn to ride a bicycle in 30 days, but it is questionable whether the same applies to critical thinking. However, these inconsistencies manifest an important tendency – an attempt to conceptualize critical thinking *beyond* "skills-based" paradigm.

Ruggiero (2014; 2015) takes one step further in this direction. He adopts "personal-traits-based" approach trying to characterize (or, one may say, "picture") critical *thinker* instead of being content with abstract, uninformative definition of critical *thinking* (this approach is shared with A. Aronson and H. Siegel). In his influential *The Concept of Mind*, Oxford philosopher Ryle (2009) denounces "the myth of the ghost in the machine" and insists that psychological concepts ("knowing", "believing", "thinking" etc.), if they are meaningful at all, apply not to immaterial substance, viz. "mind", but to the modes of human behaviour. In accordance with "logical behaviourism", Ruggiero states: "Intelligence isn't just something we have. It is, more importantly, something we do" (2015, p.1). Special traits of critical thinkers are manifest in his versatile interactions with material and social environments (Ganushchak–Efimenko *et al.,* 2018); it is not only a matter of backing up one's beliefs and decisions with plausible assumptions (Ruggiero, 2014). In other words, the "skills-based" approach leaves "something important" aside as it abstracts critical thinking from a practical, "empirical" level.

As we see, the turn form "skills-based" to "personal-traits-based" approach marks a qualitatively new step in the conceptualization of critical thinking. But an individual not only changes (to a larger or smaller extent) environments he interacts with, but also he himself constantly undergoes changes in the processes of socialization, acculturation, psychological adjustment, physical adaptation, etc. Different factors of the immediate social environment can prevent an individual from implementing his skills, dispositions and traits, even these which theoreticians tend to prescribe to critical thinking. It is an important implication of famous "social influence" experiments of S. Milgram, S. Asch or Ph. Zimbardo. Thus, the

third logical step in the theoretical analysis of logical thinking is the "in-group-tendencies-based" approach. It is prominent in the theory of M. Lipman (1995; 2003). He sets himself in opposition to Ennis and the mainstream tradition (i.e. *The Critical Thinking Movement*) emphasizing the following points. First, critical thinking is not necessarily constructive – in general, it is "a tentative skepticism," as it "can help us decide what claims not to believe" (2003, p.47). Second, the mainstream conceptualization lacks "a single organizing principle from the start" (p.58). Third, misleading theoretical implications follow from the fallacious identifications of "teaching *about* critical thinking", "teaching *for* critical thinking" and "teaching for *logical* thinking". Lipman's alternative is the ideal of "a philosophical community of inquiry" (Lipman, 2003). According to him, in such community "a system of thought" is constituted dialectically: differences of specific judgements are overcome by generalizations; a weight of generalizations is measured relatively to specific judgements; facts are not separated from values what ensures that intra-communal dialogue is "in reflective equilibrium" (Lipman, 2003). Thus, something we call "thinking critically" revels not solely or primarily individual cognitive capacities of a "thinker" but, in the first place, shared norms and collective understanding of what counts as "thinking" and "being critical". These shared and usually implicit attitudes take shape in the contexts of education (especially high education). So there is a sufficient reason to refocus theoretical gaze from skills to societal norms, form dispositions and traits to actions, their practical and moral consequences, in short, from "critical thinking" paradigm to "criticality" paradigm (Davies, 2015; Davies, Barnett, 2015). This paradigm shift manifests in the seminal paper of Burbules, Berk (1999) and works of Barnett (1997; 2004). Unless we are inclined to treat thinking in isolation, as "a thing in itself", we can concede Barnett that thinking, being applied "critically", takes place across different domains ("knowledge", "self", "world") and reaches different qualitative levels (from "critical skills" to "transformatory critique"). In other words, it is time to abandon the old-fashioned positivistic notion of critical thinking as a tool (or instrument) and develop humanistic ("Heideggerian") notion of critical thinking as a mode of human existence (cf. Chaffee, 2012; Saulius, 2016).

What about the common denominator of these diverse conceptualizations of critical thinking? Is it at all possible to identify one? One can notice that differences appear mainly in emphasis but not from complete elimination of important aspects or layers of the phenomenon in question. Ennis does not eliminate social context which is of main importance to Barnett. However, it seems that continuing theoretical discussion presupposes the one and the same general idea – that of "reflection". Critical thinking is *essentially reflective*. It is higher-order "thinking about thinking", "meta-cognition". It is thinking in the one sense of inferring or deciding and in another sense of questioning (evaluating) inferences or decisions in the face of our authentic experiences (Halpern, 2014; Halonen, 1995). We can trace the concept back to Dewey's "reflectivity". As he puts it, "this process of arriving at an idea of what is absent on the basis of what is at hand is inference" (1997, p. 190); *refection*, in contrast with inference, "implies that something is believed in (or disbelieved in), not on its own direct account, but through something else which stands as witness, evidence, proof, voucher, warrant; that is, as the ground of belief" (Dewey, 1997, p.8; Butterworth, Thwaites, 2013). Thus, we may conclude that the notion of critical thinking in its core is Deweyan.

2. Methods of Critical Thinking

Once one adopts still paradigmatic "skills-approach", one immediately faces the fact that comparison and evaluation of cognitive skills are more complicated than that of motor or

other skills (Butterworth, Thwaites, 2013; Polyanska *et al.,* 2019). How do we decide that the specific style of thinking is a proper instantialisation of theoretically appealing "critical thinking"? On the one hand, "skills-approach" gives one comfort that "critical thinking" can be trained and implemented by standardised techniques (e.g. Facione, 1990). On the other hand, practical standards seem to be quite unclear and ungrounded due to theoretical controversies outlined in the previous chapter. So, to what extent can we learn and teach critical thinking in a methodic (uniform) manner?

The famous mathematician and philosopher R. Descartes once noticed that "the power of judging well and of distinguishing the true from the false (…) is naturally equal in all men," however, "it is not enough to have a good mind; the main thing is to apply it well" (Descartes, 1985, p.111). This accelerated the tradition that was aiming at putting human reason "on the right path". Descartes himself drafted *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* (1628), his follower B. Spinoza composed *On the Improvement of the Understanding* (1677). Contemporary handbooks on critical thinking are very much in a line with this tradition – the tradition based on the idea of General Intellect (or Reason) applicable to various domains. Ennis claims that "there is a common core of basic principles that apply in most fields" (1987, p.31). In his handbook, Kallet (2014) emphasizes instrumentalist interpretation of thinking: "Critical thinking is a purposeful method for enhancing your thoughts beyond your automatic, everyday thinking. It's a process that uses a framework and tool set" (p.9). Reflectivity is explicitly understood as an application of a ready-made tools ("skeleton keys") whenever one tries to make sense of information one is provided with. We should be sensitive to various attempts to persuade us; and, as long as personation is a matter of argumentation, we should equip with argument-detection-and-deconstruction instrumentaria (Bowell, Kemp, 2010).

Let's take a closer look at the repository or critical thinking tools (methods). In a standard handbook, after a more or less clear chapter (or passage) on "the very idea of critical thinking", the reader is usually presented with a portion of logical semantics. We are being told that arguments are made of propositions, and propositions – of concepts. Vagueness and equivocality of the concepts open various doors to argumentation which, from the logical point of view, is unacceptable, absolutely "illegal" (alas is somehow tolerated in rhetoric and everyday communication) (e.g. Lau, 2011; Rainbolt, Dwyer, 2012; Halpern, 2014; Moore, Parker, 2015). The second lesson which repeatedly appears in contemporary handbooks on critical thinking comes from the propositional logic. One should keep in mind a fundamental distinction between a proposition and linguistic expression, i.e. between logic and grammar. The same proposition can be expressed in different clauses or statements. These platitudes were made educationally indispensable in the paradigm courses of logic by Cohen and Nagel (*An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method*, 1934), and I. Copi (*Introduction to Logic*, 1953). Familiarization with instruments of text analysis in terms of propositional logic (i.e. analysis of how compound propositions are made using different "logical operators") is usually accompanied by considerations on the "ethics of interpretation" reminding us about the risks to fall into the "Strawman Fallacy". So far, the methods of critical thinking are nothing but these of symbolic logic. "The basic principles" of critical thinking are general, universally applicable because they are formal laws of thinking which logic conveys.

Seemingly, the notion of symbolic (or mathematical) logic looks less attractive than a shiny label of critical thinking. The idea that one can become a good thinker without a boring drill in Aristotelian syllogistics is energising. On the other hand, the need to assess in the most rigorous way currently accessible whether students are good at critical thinking encourages educators to cling to exercises of symbolic logic. For example, *Cornell Critical Thinking Test* (2005) designed by Ennis and colleagues covers three main "modes of thinking" – induction,

deduction and values judgement – of which the second is at the centre of attention. It is evaluated in more detail according to such criteria as "inferences", "observations", "statements" and "assumptions". Obviously, validity and soundness, the basic logical features of arguments, is a matter of concern here. However, this concern pervades many different critical thinking assessment tests (see Ennis, 2003; Liu *et al.,* 2014). Thus, provided with clear standards and efficient techniques, critical thinking manifests itself as "argument analysis". As Ennis (1962) puts it, "critical thinking is taken to be the correct assessing of statements" (p.83). To be sure, "argument analysis", as something to be learned and to be tested in critical thinking classes, has a flavour of academic scrupulousness. It better resonates positivists' ideals of "scientific method" and "scientific knowledge" than philosophically more loaded "text interpretation" or "discourse deconstruction".

Traditional textbooks propose various educational techniques to teach and practice "argument analysis". The most common one is so-called *"argument standardization"*, i.e. making a list of core components of argumentation, unambiguously prescribing a logical function (that of "thesis", "premise" or "sub-premise") to each of them (Lau, 2011; Butterworth, Thwaites; 2013). Standardization appears to be useful in important respects: "It allows us to isolate the premises and conclusion from parts of the surrounding text that are side remarks or background material, as distinct from premises or conclusion. It also requires that we reword some material so that claims expressed indirectly are stated explicitly" (Govier, 2014, p.23). What we have here is a procedure of drawing a clear line between "text" an "context", "message" and "noise" – procedure which must take into account a "pragmatic" aspect of verbal communication (Sinnott-Armstrong, Fogelin, 2010) and thus is always open to familiar hermeneutical issues. If "argument standardization" is nothing but "summarizing" or "paraphrasing" (Bassham *et al.,* 2011), i.e. interpretation, it is a matter of dispute whether one should make a clear-cut distinction between "formal" ad "informal" analysis of argumentation. However, as we have said earlier, educators and theoreticians of critical thinking tend to present their subject matter as something akin to mathematics, something which can be treated at the highest levels of "scientific" precision and rigour.

This impression is being strengthened by the application of the so-called *"argument diagramming"* method in mainstream textbooks. "Information visualization" – it is quite a strong trend in the new millennia education. One of its proponents is J. Novak who acquired worldwide recognition by introducing and popularising "concept maps", a technique of graphical representation of how different notions, the main "bearers of meaning", hierarchically interrelates among themselves making up informational content of the text (Novak, 2010). But representation and interpretation are two sides of the same coin, at least in what concerns learning process: "<…> the act of drawing [diagrams] may contribute to the development of mental models, and so diagrams produced by students may not always be a representation of what has been learned, but rather what is currently being learned" (Kinchin, 2016, p.9). "Argument diagrams" – visualization of the logical structure of argumentation in which not only logical functions of its component propositions is evident but also "linked" and "independent" premises are clearly distinguished (Bassham *et al.,* 2011; Lau, 2011). In such diagrams (or "maps") any elaborate, complex argument is treaded as a sum of primitive sub-arguments (consisting of two-three premises and conclusion) (Govier, 2014) and in this very respect "diagramming" appears to be quite efficient educational devise (Halpern, 2014; Harrell, Wetzel, 2015). However, as some experts (consult Eemeren, 2001) have recognized, its educational efficiency largely depends on the textbook examples of argumentation which are provided to train student's "diagramming" skills and which, to a large extent, appear to be "precise, decisive, and non-contextual" (Walton, 1996, p.108). The fewer alternatives of

interpretation are left for students, the better (in a pedagogical sense) textbook examples are. In accordance with Platonic idea that only verbal argument is a proper media for rationality, today educators and theoreticians tend to threat "diagramming", or "mapping", only as the complementary mode of expression and resist the quite sound intuition that "argument diagram" is a peculiar and independent form of argumentation (Andrews, 2010). In other words, one's intention to re-present somebody's else argument can lead to the presentation of one's one argument.

In our rather general considerations, two important aspects of critical thinking methods emerged. The task to elaborate precise techniques of critical thinking application and education narrows the very concept of critical thinking to "argument analysis". This, in a sense, flattens Ennis's popular conception of critical thinking as "reflective and reasonable decision what to believe or do" which presupposes not only decision analysis but also decision making (synthesis of relevant information). On the other hand, "argument analysis", at its best, focuses on the formal, structural aspects of argumentation. This tendency has an effect of minimalising relevance of contextual and rhetorical aspects and, thus, oversimplification of natural communication.

3. Critical Thinking in Business Education

Definition of business education possesses no fewer issues than that of critical thinking. It is widely and rather inadequately understood as "a domain governed by traditional business disciplines, such as accounting, economics, finance, management, and marketing" (Topi, 2013, p.107). At any rate, business education is one among the spheres which are the most sensitive to the processes occurring outside university walls (Davis, 2013; Pinkovetskaia, Balynin, 2018; Popov *et al.,* 2019). One cannot make a profit, contribute to "economic development", out of false models and outdated theories. Seemingly, it is a sphere where the idea of critical thinking is "at home". But, keeping in mind what has been concluded in previous chapters, one should confront an important question: to what extent do prevailing conceptions of critical thinking and traditional techniques of its education respond to the needs of contemporary business education?

First of all, in today's popular and academic media the very idea of business education has been stripped off its initial appeal and submitted to extensive revision. For example, L. O'Shaughnessy, famous financial journalist and an author of provocative posts "8 Reasons Not to Get a Business Degree" and "Why You Don't Need to Major in Business", concludes: "Among the students who learn the least in college are social work, education and business majors. In contrast, the researchers found that students majoring in the humanities, social sciences, hard sciences and math do relatively well" (O'Shaughnessy, 2011). Referring to a survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), O'Shaughnessy distinguishes three competencies which are considered to be the most desirable by employers, namely "Communication skills", "Analytic skills" and "Teamwork skills", and claims that these are the competencies "that you are usually more likely to find with a liberal arts education" (O'Shaughnessy, 2011). D. L. Everett, the Dean of Arts and Sciences at Bentley University, respond that one shouldn't stick to the "doomsday scenario" of the future business education and try to materialise a brighter alternative, "a new educational fusion". In this scenario "philosophy, science, math, history, English, modern languages, etc. work in tandem with professional courses to provide a novel type of education" (Everett, 2011). It is hard to tell what the essential issue of this vigorous polemics is. If it is the question of whether business studies at the higher education level should be

narrower, more "professionally oriented", then one should firstly decide what the main mission of the contemporary higher education is (Volchik *et al.,* 218). Everett is absolutely right in pointing out that the meaning of distinction "business education versus liberal education" is far from being evident (Everett, Page, 2013). On the other hand, if the issue is that business education does not guaranty personal financial success, that investment in business studies not always gives significant dividends, then it the matter of *personal* decision whether it is worth risking one's money by paying for one's business studies. At any rate, "profession is not enough" argument is very frequent in the discussions concerning prospects of business education (Kliegl, Weaver, 2012; Davis, 2013; Chandler, Teckchandani, 2015) and it has become a standard tactic to support this argument with various expert opinions and statistics claiming the relevance of critical thinking for meaningful learning at university or college and future professional career (e. g. Szenes *et al.,* 2015; Dwyer *et al.,* 2015). Critical thinking tasks are much tried and trusted benchmarks for the effectiveness of a study program. However, critical thinking training does not require to dissolve "traditional business disciplines" in the universal diluent of humanities: "<…> critical thinking is unique neither to the humanities nor to the arts and sciences more generally. A good business education, for example, teaches critical thinking in management, marketing, accounting, finance, and other courses" (Everett, Page, 2013, p.9). In sum, to say that business studies have something to do with critical thinking means that maintaining a degree of specialization they meet both the "existential", or "self-constitutional", needs of students and the sheer "utilitarian" requirements of employers.

It looks like palpability or triviality that an introduction of critical thinking courses to business studies in colleges and universities has a significant positive effect. However, any attempt to specify what exactly this effect is, which educational parameters it directly concerns, faces the bulk of conceptual issues we discussed in the previous chapters. As we said earlier, there are three possibilities to define "critical thinking" and "critical thinking education" more precisely: critical thinking courses can contribute to specific *skills* acquisition and development; these courses can contribute in important respects to *character* development; and, finally, critical thinking tasks can encourage students to conform to *the specific social ideals and norms* – these of the "community of inquiry" (using Lipman's term). Which answer is better justified in *business education settings*?

Let's consider a "skill-oriented perspective" first. According to this approach, "The ability to think critically is an important skill that employers look for in employees, as it enables individuals to act independently; analyse and evaluate data in order to draw conclusions; and thus, make the inferences, judgments and decisions necessary to take action" (Dwyer *et al.,* 2015, p.261; Dwyer *et al.,* 2014). As we have seen, adopting this approach there is a suspicious move from the thesis claiming the universal application of critical thinking skill (or skills) to a more qualified statement that what really matters here is the skill (or skills) involved in the analysis of verbal arguments. In educationally relevant cases, "data", or "information", is presented in the form of statements and the "logical inference" is the essential form of the relation among them. Once such we are accustomed to representing such structures using "boxes and arrows" techniques, it is tempting to hypothesize that "argument diagramming", as a critical thinking tool, is beneficial for business education. Empirical researches seem to confirm such a hypothesis (Dwyer *et al.,* 2011; 2012). However, such researches are confined to very tentative results: "<…> teaching critical thinking skills through argument mapping applied to management cases can be successful in a business context" (Kunsch *et al.,* 2014; Sulkowski, 2019). They only increase conceptual mud that covers the idea of critical thinking, once important questions remain unasked and unanswered:

To what extent does the information that is relevant in business settings conform to standard ("textbook") patterns of argumentation? Why should one concede patterns recognition to be more important in such settings than sensitivity to unique details and "contextual" nuances?[1] Does "argument diagramming" have any practical application outside university or college classes? Of course, critical thinking can business education in different ways. Following Ennis' distinction, one can apply "the general approach" and make critical thinking the separate study subject; secondly, it is possible to adopt "the immersion approach", to teach critical thinking in classes of various traditional subjects without informing students that they are engaging in something special ("interdisciplinary"); thirdly, teachers of traditional subjects can inform students about their intention to foster something called "critical thinking" in their classes – adopt "the infusion approach" (Ennis, 1989). Researchers agree that the second and the third approaches are prevalent in today's business education (Brumagim, Cann, 2012; Anderson, Reid, 2013; Kunsch *et al.,* 2014), and this leads to another challenging issue. Proponents of critical thinking training stress its usefulness for studying various business-related disciplines (management, accounting, economics, etc.). But why should we not assume the opposite – that traditional business disciplines foster student's critical thinking? In short, "critical thinking skill(s)" is something we are unable to isolate experimentally as a variable, even define unambiguously as a theoretical construct, therefore statements about "the significance of critical thinking skill(s)" are rather normative (ideological) than empirical (factual).

As to the "person-oriented perspective", things look rather different here. Let's remember that in this perspective the emphasis is not on "critical thinking skill(s)" but on "critical thinker", a certain type of individual, himself. Thus, in this context, critical thinking training has a broader meaning of "character education". In business studies desired outcome of such education is usually marked by the notions of *leader* and *leadership*. According to the dictionary definition, the concept of leadership comprises "position, traits, and characteristics associated with the principal managers and executives who exercise authority and power, set the trends, influence and motivate their peers and subordinates, and determine the goals and fortunes of an organization" (Kurian, 2013, p.165). Though this definition emphasises the disposition and exertion of power as a core element of leadership, from the standpoint of Foucault philosophy (Foucault, 1995, p.184) "power", "the deployment of force", is indistinguishable from "knowledge", "the establishment of truth" (or "competence", "professionalism", "expertise" as this aspect is named in popular literate about leadership). Different remarks that critical thinking is indispensable for today leaders (Oliver, Hioco, 2012; Fink, 2013; Jenkins, Andenoro, 2016; Goryunova, Jenkins, 2017) can be interpreted as an indication of a common belief that in contemporary "civilized" societies the "power" is not "blind", irrational force. "Leadership is not inert; it is a very dynamic endeavor" (Flores *et al.,* 2012, p.219). But, once again, one should confront inconvenient questions what is the main message of such declarative claims, whether they only bear "ideological" character or they convey some factual content. As a matter of fact, in business settings "most leaders operate from an egocentric world view and lack well-developed critical thinking skills" (Flores *et al.,* 2012, p.218; Rooke, Torbert, 2005). Reflective attitude toward one's decisions and guesses, readiness to examine and change, if they are found faulty, one's most basic presuppositions, in short, all these hailed virtues of "critical thinker" find their best realization in the paper not

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[1] Consider the following much telling passage about traditional critical thinking training (Feldman, 2014, p.186): "Three common problems arise in reconstructing arguments: The reconstructed arguments are only approximations of well-formed arguments, often because of subtle shifts in wording; they do not include all the premises they should; and they include unnecessary premises. To avoid these problems, *it is useful to make reconstructions conform to standard patterns of argument*" (emphasis added by T.S and D.V.).

in the real-life conflicts of incompatible beliefs and motives. However, this does not imply that education in general and business education, in particular, can proceed without projecting its aims and goals in the plane of abstractions and idealizations. Here the main point is that theoretical models and educational programs shouldn't ignore Hume's fundamental distinction between "what is" and "what ought to be".

After these considerations, the third option, i.e. "social norms perspective" of critical thinking, seems to be the most adequate. It is in accord with Dewey's basic conviction that the normative aspect of meaningful education cannot be separated from the actual life of society and identified exclusively with those conclusions which have strong theoretical appeal, looks "logically supported" (Dewey, 2004). The reality to which all individuals (regardless of their proficiency to speculate) belong is the main source of justification. In this respect, Lipmans' notion of "community of inquiry" is a significant continuation of Deweyan ideas: such community is proposed as a medium enabling to translate student's experience to society and, vice versa, society's experience to a student (Lipman, 2003). Thus, "critical thinking" has a relevant meaning of the set of values and norms which fosters "experience circulation" between an individual and his social environment. These norms play a vital role in business education: "It has often been the case that some students, seemingly motivated only by utilitarian concerns, simply never consider or abandon the hope of finding meaning and purpose that is truly satisfying. They need initiation into critical thought, in part so that they may reflect upon the careerism to which they have become subject" (Daloz Parks, 2000, p.164). In other words, a community shaped by critical thinking ideals encourages individual to externalize his motives and meanings, to place them and reflect them in substantially wider contexts. In this respect, the beaten term of critical thinking is only a means to redescribe in more modern fashion the essential intention of Socratic philosophical endeavour. In *Apology*, Socrates explains to the court that his "philosophical practice" (gr. *philosophein*) consists in "examining himself and others, "questioning and testing" his fellow citizens addressing them in the following manner: "My very good friend, you are an Athenian and belong to a city which is the greatest and most famous in the world for its wisdom and strength. Are you not ashamed that you give your attention to acquiring as much money as possible, and similarly with reputation and honour, and give no attention or thought to truth and understanding and the perfection of your soul?" (Plato, 1993, p.53). The Athenian court sentenced Socrates to death. Limpan's "community of inquiry" (alongside with Popper's "open society") proposes an important alternative where externalization of subjective beliefs, collaborative testing them for inconsistency, and internalization of the resulting experience has a status of "normal social practice".

In the last chapter of the paper, we discussed the role of "critical thinking" notion in a discussion concerning the legitimation of business education. We tried to assess how three main approaches to critical ("skill-oriented perspective", "person-oriented perspective" and "social norms-perspective") fit the business studies setting. The major finding was that the third perspective is the most adequate because there is no intention to veil or diminish the normative character of contemporary discourse on critical thinking.

Conclusions

The main conclusions of our paper are the following. Firstly, there are three main approaches to critical thinking – "skill-oriented perspective", "person-oriented perspective", and "social norms-perspective", and the first approach seems to be the most promising to theoreticians and educators. However, at a closer look, it is the most inconsistent. All three

approaches are grounded on Deweyen abstract idea of reflectivity. Secondly, in educational practice, "critical thinking" is narrowed to "argument analysis" and provided with different tools that are thought to be effective in representation of the "standard argumentation patterns". To make "argument analysis" a precise procedure students are provided with clear-cut, "non-contextual", thus, artificial, textbook examples. Finally, in business education settings, the third theoretical approach, "social norms centered perspective", appears to be the most adequate as it does not smother "ideological" or "normative" nature of the critical thinking concept.

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KRITINIS MĄSTYMAS ŠIANDIENINĖJE VERSLO EDUKACIJOJE: FILOSOFINĖS PERSPEKTYVOS

Tomas Saulius, Dovilė Valančienė, Svitlana Bilan

SANTRAUKA

Informacijos eroje „kritinis mąstymas" žymi tai, kas neabejotinai reikšminga tiek prasmingam ugdymui, tiek konkurencingumui darbo rinkoje. „Kritinis mąstymas" laikomas postmodernaus žmogaus „dorybe", tam tikra būtina efektyvaus veikimo profesiniame ir socialiniame gyvenime prielaida. Tačiau, žvelgiant iš teorinės pusės, kritinio mąstymo sąvoka anaiptol nėra nei aiški, nei apibrėžta; edukaciniu požiūriu ji toli gražu nėra nedviprasmiškas orientyras renkantis medžiagą ir metodus ugdytiniams teikiamoms užduotims. Nors kritinio mąstymo sąvoka plačiai vartojama įvairiausiuose diskursuose, tai savaime nepaaiškina, kas pridedama prie „mąstymo" prasmės, kai jis įvardijamas kaip „kritinis".

Straipsnio tikslas – išnagrinėti, kokia kritinio mąstymo koncepcija ir kokios praktinės šios koncepcijos išvados turi didžiausią reikšmę verslo edukacijos kontekstuose. Atliekant tyrimą, taikyta filosofinė konceptualioji analizė ir prieita prie tam tikrų išvadų. Pirma, galima išskirti tris pagrindines prieigas, svarbias teoriškai nagrinėjant kritinio mąstymo sąvoką, būtent – „į įgūdžius orientuotą perspektyvą", „į asmenį orientuotą perspektyvą" ir „socialinių normų perspektyvą"; visos jos grindžiamos abstrakčia „reflektyvumo" idėja, kuri akcentuojama Dewey filosofijoje. Antra, teoretikai ir ugdytojai-praktikai linkę kritinio mąstymo sąvoką susiaurinti ir jį traktuoti kaip „argumentacijos analizę", o tai juos skatina „kritinio mąstymo lavinimą" apriboti vadovėlinėmis „argumentacijos schemomis" ir dirbtiniais pavyzdžiais. Trečia, verslo edukacijos kontekstuose „į socialines normas orientuota perspektyva" teoriškai aiškinant kritinį mąstymą yra adekvačiausia, kadangi ją taikant išvengiama dažnos klaidos, t. y. faktinių ir normatyvinių aspektų supainiojimo apibrėžiant ugdymo tikslus.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: kritinis mąstymas, argumentacija, verslo edukacija.