




EDUCATION PLUS

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K. Elango

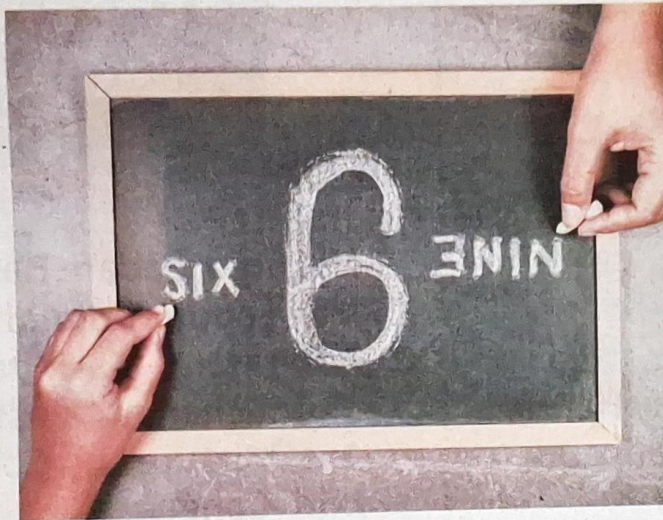
Today, "thinking" has become a necessary skill in the job market. But it has been split into creative thinking, critical thinking, design thinking, analytical thinking, logical thinking, strategic thinking, and holistic thinking.

These are then further pigeonholed into higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and lower-order thinking skills (LOTS). Not to forget Edward de Bono's classification of lateral thinking and vertical thinking. All of which only intensifies one's confusion instead of providing clarification.

While "thinking" is a highly desired skill, it eludes many because it is highly demanding until one is habituated. Then there is the inundation by print and social media and the fact that thinkers are often misunderstood and condemned.

Vital two

To engage learners in the cognitive process, we need to consider models and texts. Of the former, two have proven to be impactful: Hegelian dialectical thinking and Bono's Six Thinking Hats. Dialectical thinking, although traced back to the Socratic method, is attributed to Hegel, the 19th century German philosopher who advocated seeking true meaning in two apparently contradictory positions. Instead of extremes



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Think, but dialectically

What is dialectical thinking? Why is it increasingly becoming a required skill?

such as "right" or "wrong", he postulated moving away from "either-or" to "both-and". In other words, right is not totally correct, and wrong is not totally wrong. An interesting metaphor illustrative of this model is "having an elephant in the room with two blindfolded people on its opposite ends".

Bono's Six Thinking Hats ideally comprises a group of six, each wearing a different hat. But it can also involve one individual wearing six hats one after another. Each hat has a colour that symbolises a different kind of thinking: white for facts, red for emotions, black for negatives, yellow for positives, green for new

ideas and blue for summarising and decision-making. This helps learners tackle an issue from multiple perspectives and overcome the usual mono-dimensional thinking.

The problem confronting teachers is integrating this skill into prescribed textbooks, which may often be unyielding. This then compels them to

browse through a high volume of texts available online in a variety of formats but how many are willing to do this?

Applications

The current Russia-Ukraine war is an apt context to apply dialectical thinking. While Russian president Vladimir Putin defends the war as an attempt to retrieve lost land and Russian pride; Ukraine and the west blame it on his autocratic behaviour and warmongering. Where does the truth lie?

Achieving a dialectical balance is vital. The Six Thinking Hats would bring into focus aspects such as facts on both sides (white); the emotional turmoil of civilians and soldiers (red); sufferings of both nations and the world at large (black); positives if any for the two countries and globally (yellow); probable solutions to the problem (green); a standpoint based on critical engagement with the ideas put forth (blue).

We live in a tumultuous world of issues at local, national, regional and global levels. Tapping into them will be effortless, but narrowing them down to thought-provoking material for the classroom will be a challenge. Will our teachers think out of the box?

The writer is National Secretary, English Language Teachers' Association of India (ELTAI), and a former professor of English at Anna University.

A guided route

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This career counselling column may help



OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I am in Class 9 but not sure about my career path. I want a job in which I can be creative and have a good salary. I am interested in design but the variety of options confuses me. - Asha

Dear Asha,

How creative are you? What do you enjoy? Art, drawing, colouring, out-of-the-box thinking? Art and Design courses (and careers eventually) include all sorts of exposure from UI to UX design, product design, video games design, multimedia art and animation, web design, exhibitions design, interior designing, fashion, jewellery and so on. First, identify if this is something that you would like to study more about and pursue as a subject. You will eventually know what your calling is and where your core interest lies.

I am currently doing B.A. English Language and Literature. But I want to join intelligence services like RAW or IB. What should I do? - Sreedevi

Dear Sreedevi,

India's Research and Analysis Wing gathers intelligence on other nations, especially those close to India, to protect it from any attacks, threats, and terrorist dangers by creating suitable policies, establishing international ties, and neutralising any threat to our democracy or safety.

The UPSC exam is one route to join RAW (Group A officers from IAS, IPS, IFS and IRS). There are also other strategies for hiring. A candidate has to pass a psychological test and an interview. The eligibility criteria are graduation from a reputable institution and fluency in one foreign language. She/he must be an Indian with no criminal record. The age requirement is less than 56 years and the candidate must have more than 20 years of professional experience.

I completed my UG Electrical and Electronics Engineering in 2020 and am currently working in an IT company. I enrolled in M.Sc. Cybersecurity and Informatics. Since my UG degree is unrelated to this, should I continue or drop out and look for another course? - Shasha

Dear Shasha,

Why did you enrol in this

course? Work on the pros and cons of your choice and then arrive at your answer. Some good career options after this course are to work as a Research Associate, an Ethical hacker, a Penetration Tester, a Cyber Legal Service, a Security Code Auditor, and a Cryptographic Expert. It is also a well-rewarding industry for the right candidate.

I am doing B.Sc. Medical with Zoology, Botany, and Chemistry. I want to do my Master's in Clinical Embryology. Will I be eligible? - Vanshika

Dear Vanshika,

You can apply for an M.Sc. in Clinical Embryology after your B.Sc. course. The eligibility criteria are B.Sc with at least one subject of Biological Science/ Biotechnology or MBBS from a recognised institution. Selection is done by an admission board strictly on merit. MET M.Sc. (Clinical Embryology) is conducted by Manipal Academy of Higher Education.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line 'Off the edge'.