

CRITICAL THINKING

Activity 2: Challenge assumptions

Activities to promote adults' personal, social and learn to learn skills

Description of initiatives comprised in this handbook.

Title/name	Challenge assumptions
LifeComp Skill approached	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-regulation <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility <input type="checkbox"/> Well-being <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration <input type="checkbox"/> Growth mindset <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Critical thinking <input type="checkbox"/> Managing learning
Duration ¹	Approx 40 minutes
Type of activity	Self and group reflection and discussion
Short description	This activity helps adults to facilitate key critical thinking principles, and enables the participants to question assumptions, and to re-evaluate problems taking into account different variables and sensible risks. The tasks are designed in a way to support creativity and collaboration. The task is foreseen as a group exercise.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster critical thinking as a part of career and life skills • Improve assessment skills • Improve argumentation skills • Supporting reflective and independent thinking
Setting ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Facilitator • Room with chairs, • Tables (1 per group) • Either paper A3, markers or online board
Facilitators' Tips ³	<p>The activity combines concepts and methods to increase critical thinking, like brainstorming, and challenge assumptions.</p> <p>As the activity may be difficult for the participants at the beginning, the facilitator can provide one example of a possible assumption/preconception. It may take a little time to get started, as for some people it will remain as an objective truth until the assumptions are pointed out to them; this is not unusual. However,</p>

¹ It can be continuously.

² Materials and resources needed to implement it, including financial, human resources and spaces. In case is needed a worksheet, please use the following document to prepare it.

³ What a person needs to know to implement the activity.

	once participants understand the task they can generally identify a number of assumptions themselves.
Step by step	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The facilitator distributes to the participants a worksheet with the statement “An experienced teacher is the best person to design the lesson” explaining to participants that this statement is a truism that would generally be agreed with (please consult Material for Participants Worksheet) 2. Participants are then invited to deconstruct the phrase to identify where assumptions are being made in this statement. 3. The participants will work in small groups (3-4 people). 4. When the groups finish the list of assumptions, the facilitator provides an explanation of what critical thinking is. 5. The next stage is related to the method called ‘what if-ing’, in which a process of critical thinking is initiated by posing questions beginning with the words ‘what if’. Facilitator takes one of the assumptions listed by the groups, and starts the question “What if”. 6. Participants are invited to provide answers to questions presented.
Debriefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What insights or learnings do you have about yourself? ● Does the activity help you to work on your own argumentation? ● If you now recall some previous difficult situations, would you now think about other possible solutions? Would you now make a different decision?
References	Creative thinking in literacy and language skills Training Guidelines developed within the Erasmus + Project (2016)



Challenge assumptions – Material for Facilitator

Worksheet – Critical thinking

“Critical thinking is not so difficult if we put our minds to achieving it, there are still little obstacles that may trip us up along the way, preventing us from achieving our goals.” Our assumptions are often based on what we have experienced or been told in a previous situation, something we might refer to as ‘received wisdom’, which in the vast majority of cases is valid. However, a failure to challenge assumptions and to just accept things as they are, can seriously restrict our ability to find new ideas, methods, designs etc. Therefore, the conscious and deliberate act of challenging assumptions can and should be used in critical thinking. When faced with a scenario or statement we should attempt to understand if we are making any assumptions about the situation that may ultimately lead you to a predictable solution.”

For the statement: *“An experienced teacher is the best person to design the lesson”*

The possible list of assumption include:

- Experience is an indicator of quality
- Somebody without teaching experience would not be good at designing the lesson
- Lesson design is not a democratic process
- A person needs to design the lesson
- A lesson needs to be designed
- A teacher should design the lesson.

For the “what if-ing” process.

We can illustrate this subsequent stage of the process: ‘What if’ we didn’t design the lesson? (Challenging the assumption that a lesson needs to be designed).

Possible answers from other groups as an example:

- We could set a topic and invite learners to start discussing it and see where it takes us.
- We could ask the learners to design a lesson for themselves.
- We could introduce a topic and ask learners what they think they need to know or learn about this topic.
- We could inform learners of how they will be tested on the topic and let them manage their own learning as individuals OR in small peer groups.
- We could download a lesson plan or use a lesson plan that someone else has already designed.
- We could just set a test on the topic and see if the learners need to learn this material (they may already know it).



Challenge assumptions – Material for Participants
Worksheet – Critical thinking

Statement	List the assumptions
<p><i>“An experienced teacher is the best person to design the lesson”</i></p>	

