



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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Miss Odelia Leung
Clerk to Panel
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Miss Leung,

**Response to Paper on Chinese Translation of “Critical Thinking”
by Hon Mrs. Regina Ip**

In response to the captioned paper by Hon Mrs. Regina Ip, I would like to provide a detailed explanation in both English and Chinese at the **Annex** for your reference.

Yours sincerely,


(Dr Catherine K K CHAN)
for Secretary for Education

Encl.

Chinese Translation of “Critical Thinking”

The Education Bureau pays full respect to views on critical thinking expressed by the Hon Mrs. Regina IP. In fact, we see no major disparity between her understanding of the essence of critical thinking and ours. In sum, we would like to respond to her query as follows:-

1. Hon Mrs. IP supports scholars’ definitions of ‘critical thinking’ that include elements, among others, such as “knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning” and “judgement which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptualor contextual considerations upon which that judgement is based”. At a deeper level, the definitions given by these scholars also confirm that critical thinking also requires an ability to draw warranted conclusions and generalisations, as well as a willingness to reconsider one’s judgements. This understanding of critical thinking is in line with what has been stated in our curriculum documents, i.e. that critical thinking is about drawing out meaning from given data or statements, examining their accuracy, generating and evaluating arguments, and seeing things from different perspectives.
2. When critical thinking was introduced as one of the skills in Liberal Studies at Advanced Supplementary Level in 1992, the meaning was explained to schools and incorporated into teacher training programmes. Since critical thinking was introduced as one of the generic skills in the curriculum reform starting from 2001, its meaning and application has also been explained in the context of specific Key Learning Areas/subjects whenever appropriate. When the Bureau started to formulate the New Senior Secondary Liberal Studies curriculum in 2004, we had again deliberated with various sectors (including tertiary institutions and schools) through multiple channels the meaning and definition of the term ‘critical thinking (批判性思考)’. Throughout the years, we have also articulated the precise meaning of ‘critical thinking’ to parents and education practitioners during our briefing/sharing sessions and professional development programmes.
3. Hon Mrs. IP further suggests that, in the context of critical thinking, the Chinese translation of ‘critical’ carries the meaning of negative criticism. It needs to be borne in mind that the term ‘批判’ as in ‘批判性思考’ is also used by governments, academics, teachers as well as teacher educators in Hong Kong², the Mainland³, Taiwan⁴, Singapore⁵, other Chinese speaking communities in the world⁶, including the official United Nations documents⁷. To them, ‘批判’ as in ‘批判性思考’ does not carry the meaning of any negative criticism as you would suggest. It is utterly important that we maintain this long-rooted terminology, which has been widely used among educators and scholars since the early 1990s, for communication with other Chinese societies in the world. Any unilateral modification of the term now will cause confusion not only to the community discourse but also to the students. In view of the above reasons, we do not deem it necessary to introduce any change in the Chinese translation ‘批判性思考’.

We appreciate Hon Mrs. IP’s efforts to identify alternative Chinese translations for ‘critical thinking’. However, translations such as ‘明辨性思考’ or ‘分辨性思考’⁸ do not involve the higher levels of thinking in critical thinking as stated above, such as evaluation, inference, drawing conclusions and generalisations, and reconsidering one’s judgements. Hence we consider the two alternatives to be less holistic than the meaning of ‘critical thinking’ that is originally intended.

¹ Glaser, Edward M. (1941) *An Experiment in the Development of Critical Thinking*, Teacher's College, Columbia University. Facione, Peter A. (1990) *Critical Thinking: A Statement of Expert Consensus for Purposes of Educational Assessment and Instruction*, a report for the American Philosophical Association.

² According to “中譯心理學詞彙” edited by academics of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (1982), ‘critical thinking’ can be translated as ‘批判性思考’. Other local examples can be found at <http://www.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/en/jep/199800210002/0307c.htm> and <http://philosophy.hku.hk/think/chi/critical.php>

³ Premier Wen Jiabao has repeatedly used ‘批判’ in the context of critical thinking, independent thinking and creativity. See http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2008-07/20/content_1050701.htm and http://www.gov.cn/2008lh/content_923654.htm. For an example of Chinese translation of English publications, see 理查·保羅, 琳達·埃爾德著; 丁薇譯 (2006) 《思考的力量：批判性思考成就卓越人生》, 上海人民出版社。

⁴ For use of ‘批判性思考’ in Taiwan’s secondary education curriculum, see http://www.moe.gov.tw/high-school/content.aspx?site_content_sn=8407 (目標、玖) For usage by academics, see <http://www.nhu.edu.tw/~society/e-j/64/64-15.htm> (批判思考內涵之探討) and <http://www.phil.nthu.edu.tw/course/1371> (批判思考)

⁵ For usage in Singapore’s curriculum document, see 新加坡教育部課程規劃與發展司(2007)《公民與道德教育課程標準：小學》, p.C-4. Available at <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/syllabuses/humanities-and-aesthetics/files/civics-and-moral-education-primary-chinese-2007.pdf>.

⁶ An example of such usage in Chinese academic articles jointly authored by Mainland Chinese and American scholars can be found at http://www.tc.columbia.edu/centers/coce/pdf_files/a5.pdf p. 5.

⁷ ‘批判性思考’ is one of the expected outcomes of the United Nations Literacy Decade 2003-2012. See <http://www.un.org/chinese/events/Literacy/action4.htm> para. 9(b).

⁸ According to 《漢語大詞典》(1990) (香港, 三聯書店), ‘分辨’ means ‘differentiate’ (辨別) or ‘distinguish’ (區別) (Vol. 2, p. 588); ‘明辨’ is ‘differentiate clearly and definitely’ (明確地分辨、辨別清楚) (Vol. 5, p.618). Therefore, ‘分辨’ and ‘明辨’ refer to the levels of differentiating data or statements and analysis, and not beyond.