E-Teacher Professional Development Workshop
University of Maryland, Baltimore County and
University of Oregon, Summer 2012

Incorporating Critical Thinking Skills and Strategies to Increase Learner Interaction in a
Mauritian State Secondary School
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Three sessions on incorporating Critical Thinking (CT) strategies to increase students’ interaction, encourage reflective thought and develop an effective process of inquiry will be organized during the last week of November, 2012, which is during the summer holidays. Each session will have 8 English Language educators from Phoenix State Secondary school. The educators will be introduced to the 35 CT strategies, Socratic Questioning, and the 8 Intellectual Standards along with Bloom’s Taxonomy whereby they will learn how CT can be used to improve their learners’ involvement in terms of students’ effective participation in the English class. The sessions will include activities like pair/group work, oral presentations and think-pair-share to encourage learners to take a more active part in the teaching-learning process. Materials from the U.S sponsored online E-Teacher Scholarship program course called Critical Thinking in English as a Foreign Language from the University of Oregon, Spring 2011, and the E-Teacher Professional Development Workshop at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), summer 2012, will be used.

Host: Phoenix State Secondary School

Participants: 8 Foreign English Language Educators

Program: 3 half day face-to-face interactive workshops

Schedule: November/Summer Holidays

Program: 1 workshop with 5 sessions on incorporating Critical Thinking strategies and skills to make learners more active in the classroom.

The E-Teacher Scholarship Program was a cooperative grant agreement between the U.S. Department of State ECA/A/L; the University of Maryland, Baltimore County; and the University of Oregon 2009-12.
**Problem Identification**
The problem is that the learners in Mauritius are passive learners and hardly participate in class. They have a low level of English speaking competency and hence find it difficult to express themselves properly. The Mauritian system of education is assessment driven with examinations at the end of each academic year. This implies continued learning approaches that support memorization at the expense of creative and critical thinking. Moreover, English is taught as a subject and not as a communicative skill and this demotivates learners tremendously as they study the language just for the sake of passing the exams instead of developing effective communicative language skills. Speaking is one of the 4 skills that have to be developed in the learners, especially as we speak nowadays of the world as a global village where effective communication is a must. However, unfortunately, out of the 4 skills, much more importance is given to the writing skill at the expense of the other 3 skills. For instance, when students reach form 5 (students aged 15-16 years), they take part in the School Certificate exam which is conducted by the Cambridge International Examinations. In this exam, out of 100%, only 12% is allotted to the oral paper as compared to 88% given to the written paper. The result is that students are not really interested in developing the oral skill, whether it is in or outside the classroom. Having the sessions on CT skills and strategies will enable educators to reflect on how they can bring in more of students’ participation in their classes together with having the students think critically and creatively, bearing in mind also the various needs of the learners. The goal of this workshop is to present to the trainees the CT skills and strategies and show them how these can be used to motivate students to have a more effective participation in class.

**Contextual Analysis**
Phoenix State Secondary School, as the name suggests is a state school and is governed by the rules laid down by the Mauritian Government. There are 60 state secondary schools in Mauritius and all of them work according to the syllabi set by the Cambridge International Examination (CIE) body. The examinations at the end of the first cycle that is form 5 or School Certificate (S.C) (students’ age 15-16 years) and the second cycle that is the Higher School Certificate (H.S.C), (students’ age 17-18 years), are the 2 most important exams that students take part in, and these examinations are conducted by the CIE.

English is a compulsory subject in my country and is the national and official language. Our mission as educators is to develop the 4 skills that include reading, speaking, listening and writing in the learners, so that they become life-long learners and are able to face this challenging world with confidence and become responsible social citizens of the world. However, since much more importance is given to writing skills, educators in Mauritius tend to give less importance to speaking skills in their classes. In fact, out of 5-6 English classes of 35 minutes weekly, only 1 class is devoted to the oral class. This proposed training will be held at Phoenix State Secondary School where students are aged from 12 to 19 years.

Shortage of facilities like the availability of the computer lab in the absence of a language lab and time constraints might be an obstacle in this endeavor.

**Learner Analysis**
The trainees will be my colleagues from the English Department, who are all secondary school educators, some of whom have taught English as a foreign language for at least 6 years and others for more than 10 years. The trainees are aged between 30 and 45 years old and are all holders of a Post Graduate Course in Education from the Mauritius Institute of Education. All the participants are highly interested in improving their teaching and bringing in more of students’ participation in the classroom.

**Content Analysis**
The course content for this workshop will be drawn from the on-line course on Critical Thinking developed by the University of Oregon, Spring 2011 and the E-Teacher Professional Development Workshop at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Summer 2012. The materials that will be used will be taken from articles and other course materials that will enlighten the trainees on concepts in Critical Thinking.
like the 8 Intellectual standards, the 35 CT strategies, Bloom’s Taxonomy and Socratic Questioning which will eventually promote CT in the learners. Audio and video materials will be used together with worksheets and check lists like the KWL chart to facilitate learning. Web-sites will also be provided so that the trainees can have a continuous learning process.

**Delivery Analysis**
The workshop will be organized at Phoenix SSS during the last week of November which is also the end of year and summer holidays. It would be a face to face, interactive workshop and the methodology will be mostly learner centered with power point presentations, pair work, group work, group discussions, and problem solving activities in order to have more learner involvement in the sessions. The trainees will be encouraged to use CT skills and apply the 8 intellectual standards.

**Project Plan**
The program will be held during the last week of November, 2012, with the hope of giving enough teaching materials and support to the trainees of the English department to start and apply the strategies in the coming school year, that is, January 2013. It will be a 3.5 day workshop and the time will depend on the availability of the trainees. As it will be during the summer holidays, trainees may have family commitments to attend to.

**Design**
This workshop has been planned after considering the teaching and learning context as well as other possible constraints. The purpose of this session is to introduce to secondary school teachers the concepts of CT skills and to illustrate strategies which will encourage students’ participation and learning in the English classes.

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<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Learning/Training Activity</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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| 1. By the end of the 1st session, participants should be able to use at least 2 C.T strategies effectively to increase students’ participation in the EFL classroom. | Our existing teaching methods and styles  
- Behavior of our learners  
- 35 Critical Thinking Strategies | Interactive session on methods actually used in the classroom  
- Activity- pair work (Rock or Feather) involving thinking where a decision has to be made  
- Hand-outs with the 35 strategies | Use of CIs- How are we doing  
A brief oral presentation of what are the thinking strategies that have been used to come to a decision |
| 2. By the end of the 2nd session, participants should be able to apply Socratic Questioning and intellectual standards in a systematic way to enable students to ask more and open-ended questions in the classroom both to the teacher and to their peers. | Power point presentation and hand-outs on Socratic Questioning and the 8 Intellectual Standards and hand-outs | Pair work and group work  
- Questions to peers relating to a past experience  
- Think-Pair-Share  
- Participants will reframe the questions to incorporate CT in them | Each group will report briefly to the class the strategy used and the reframed questions  
1-2 questions will be answered by the members of the team.  
Other questions may be asked by both the learners and the facilitator |
3. By the end of the 3rd session, participants should be able to combine CT strategies, Socratic Questioning and Intellectual Standards to have a more interactive classroom.

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<tr>
<th>Practice and Application</th>
<th>Using think-pair-share, participants discuss different situations, their reactions to them and the reasons for their choices</th>
<th>Group presentations and questions from both peers and the teacher</th>
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<td>- Analyze articles from the on-line library articles or magazines of the CT Foundation websites</td>
<td>o Trainees will also provide additional statements for discussion and effective questioning</td>
<td>Use of hot-seat–one after the other the participants ask and answer questions from anyone in the group and the facilitator</td>
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4. By the end of the 4th session, participants should be able to judge whether the goals of the workshop have been achieved.

| Materials from www.criticalthinking.org | Trainees work in pairs to develop a 15-20 minutes lesson plan that includes the CT skills and strategies | Peer-micro teaching of the lesson plans |

5. By the end of January 2013, participants should be able share and discuss how CT skills are being used in their classes and how their learners are able to apply to developing language skills.

| Delicious will be used | At the end of each week, there will be exchanges on the progress in the English classes | Survey questionnaire |

Rationale for Sequence
The sequence of the sessions has been planned in such a way that the learners are introduced to the 35 Critical Thinking strategies whereby the idea of systematic reasoning to come to a decision is clearly understood. Also, the participants will get to explain why and how based on the 35 strategies they came up with such decisions. Until and unless these 35 strategies are clearly understood and internalized, participants will not be able to apply these in their classroom. The first session will be follow the 8 Intellectual Standards and Socratic Questioning where the participants will get the opportunity to learn about and practice rephrasing questions and how to make them more specific, accurate, relevant, deep and logical. As a result participants will get a deeper insight of Questioning Technique and hence will be able to use them effectively and systematically in their classes with a view to increasing their students’ participation. Finally, the third session is based on a combination of the 35 CT strategies, Socratic Questioning and the 8 Intellectual Standards to enable participants to get a deeper understanding of how Critical Thinking should be systematically cultivated in their learners if they want their learners to become good critical thinkers to ultimately have a better quality of life.
### Development

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Gain attention</td>
<td>• A video of an oral class where students have difficulties expressing themselves in English and where they need constant prompting to participate in the class.</td>
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<td>• Sharing of personal experiences-role play</td>
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<td>Inform learners of objectives</td>
<td>A clear roadmap will be provided in terms of what the learners are expected to learn at the end of the session and how it will be implemented.</td>
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<td>Stimulate recall of prior learning</td>
<td>The session will be linked to one another and there will be repetition of key terms and concepts. Questions will also be used to ensure understanding of previous concepts.</td>
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<td>Present the content</td>
<td>Content will be presented in different ways: power-point presentations, websites will be given, problem solving activities.</td>
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<td>Guide learning</td>
<td>The learning will be guided through modeling, repetition, step by step learning, reflection and evaluation.</td>
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<td>Elicit performance (practice)</td>
<td>Activities to provide practice will be planned with collaborative learning in pair/group presentations.</td>
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<td>Provide feedback</td>
<td>There will be prompt feedback from both the participants and the trainer/instructor and scaffolding as and when required without however giving the answers.</td>
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<td>Assess performance</td>
<td>A formative assessment will be done through the presentations, together with peer and self-assessment.</td>
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<td>Enhance retention and transfer</td>
<td>The sessions will be planned in such a way that the participants’ attention will remain focused through a series of activities that will allow them to think critically and logically.</td>
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### Implementation Checklist

#### Items
- Set of resource materials- hand-outs, magazines
- Internet connection
- Stationery- colored white board markers, sheets of plain paper
- Support staff from the computer department
- Photocopying facilities

#### Tasks
- Setting up of the classroom
- Printing of hand-outs
- Clear work-plan of each session

### Evaluation

The purpose of the assessment will be to measure both the weaknesses and strengths of the workshop with an attempt to improve on the weaknesses for other possible project plans. Special attention will be given here to the content, course materials and the delivery of the sessions. A pre-workshop survey will also be developed as a needs’ analysis of the trainees.
Pre-workshop Survey
• Informal Interviews

Self-assessment
• Peer assessment
• Informal Interviews

Summative Assessment
• End of course Questionnaire to be filled by the participants