Critical thinking, which can be mastered through learning and practice, is different from general thinking, which everyone does every moment, both consciously and unconsciously. Critical thinking is conscious thinking and is geared towards achieving a set goal. Central to critical thinking is to question knowledge which is taken for granted and to explore truth through a process of rational reasoning. Such reasoning can be developed through learning and training, and by application of certain teaching methods. The project aims to introduce some of such teaching methods among select teachers of government schools in Nepal through a series of interactive workshops. Specifically, the project aims to introduce two of the most important teaching strategies that are proven to be effective in making thinking critical: Socratic Questioning and application of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

The workshops are based on the 10-week E-Teacher online course on Critical Thinking offered last year by the American English Institute in the Linguistics Department at the University of Oregon (UO AEI) (31 March – 10 June 2011); and the E-Teacher Professional Development Workshop offered by the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) for three weeks between 21 July and 11 August 2012. Both of these events were sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

Under this project, three one-day workshops will be facilitated in different locations of Nepal to promote the basics of critical thinking.

**Host:** Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA) and the District Education Office (DEO)

**Participants:** 25 Secondary level English teachers of government school of Nepal

**Program:** One-Day Workshop on Critical Thinking

**Schedule:** 3rd week of September 2012 (1st workshop), January/February 2013 (2nd and 3rd workshops). Each workshop is 6 hours long.

**Goals:** The goal of the workshops is to inform the participants of the importance of critical thinking and how to promote such thinking at secondary level school teaching, particularly among students of grades 8-10.
**Problem Identification**

The main problem is the lack of awareness among teachers that critical thinking can be taught like any other subject matter. The lack of this awareness prevents them from incorporating critical thinking strategies in their teaching activities. Another problem is the lack of resources and references that promote the teaching of critical thinking in schools. These twin problems force the teachers in my country to depend on traditional methods of teaching, which basically include rote learning and grammar-translation.

This is, however, not to suggest that teacher trainings are not available for English language teachers. Such opportunities are plentiful. Each year, numerous language trainings are conducted by the government as well as other organizations, such as the British Council and the Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA). These trainings, however, rarely deal with critical thinking as a theme. Even if they do, the training contents are rarely grounded on the practical needs of the teachers, and, thus, fall short of giving those skills on how to teach critical thinking in their situations, where there are no basic teaching facilities and resources.

**Contextual Analysis**

“Critical thinking” has just entered the arena of teaching-learning activities in Nepal. The recently introduced course – Reading, Writing and Critical Thinking (taught through the *Writing for Advanced Learners of English* by Françoise Grellet (1996, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press); and *New Directions: Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking* by Peter S Gardner (2005, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press) – for bachelor level students of English education are devoted to promoting critical thinking. Beyond this course, the theme is rarely discussed in other training or teaching-learning contexts. To address this gap, sincere efforts are necessary to orient school-level English teachers towards the basics of critical thinking.

The workshops will be organized in close cooperation with the Nepal English Language Teachers Association (NELTA), which is a non-governmental organization of 7000+ English teachers in Nepal, and the District Education Office (DEO), which is a local (district) unit of the Ministry of Education. NELTA has its district chapters in more than half of Nepal’s 75 districts, and the DEO is in all the 75 districts. Above the DEO is the Regional Directorate, one in each of five development regions of Nepal, which monitors and supervises DEOs of the particular region.

The workshops will be held in three locations of Nepal, namely in the Kathmandu valley, Kathmandu being the capital city of Nepal; in Biratnagar, the eastern development region of Nepal; and in Dhankuta, a hill district in the eastern hills of Nepal, in collaboration with an institution to be determined in consultation with the NELTA leadership. The selection of these locations is strategic. They are diverse in terms of access to facilities and resources, including training and teaching environment.

**Learner Analysis**

The learners will be secondary level English teachers from Bhaktapur (central region), Morang (eastern region) and Dhankuta. In selecting the participants, working closely with NELTA, preference will be given to the teachers from government schools over those from private institutions. Most of the government schools are Nepali-medium. Unlike private schools, which are city-centric, government schools cover a large area of the country, both urban and rural. Any information passed on to them gets down to communities, where the process of change should begin. Here the reference to change is one related to critical thinking. Once the government teachers start teaching in a way that promotes critical thinking and, thus, inculcate in children the habit of thinking critically, a whole mass of school children in rural communities will start to be creative and critical.

**Content Analysis**

The basic contents of the workshops will be the “what” and “why” of critical thinking. Selected portions or sections of the materials shared during the
online course last year will be used. Specifically, the contents from the following materials will be used:

- **Critical Thinking: An Overview**: This piece will be used to share with the participants some definitions of critical thinking and some historical milestones that have contributed to the development of this field.
- **Elements of Thought**: The elements are basic vocabularies that describe concepts related to reasoning, and explain how critical reasoning develops in a step-by-step order.
- **Socratic Questioning**: This is a way of questioning that triggers thoughts and thinking to, among other things, explore ideas, settle mysteries and find out truths.
- **Universal Intellectual Standards**: These are questions that a thinker is expected to apply to think critically.
- **Teacher Self-Reflection Checklist**: These are questions that help the teachers plan how they are going to do the teaching
- **Other materials that suggest, and provide tips on, how to promote critical thinking in a classroom situation, plan lessons, encourage student participation in learning, and evaluate student performance.**

Specifically, the workshop will concentrate on two of the most important teaching methods that are proven to be effective in making thinking critical: **Socratic Questioning** and application of **Bloom’s Taxonomy**.

Socratic Questioning – asking questions in the way Socrates did – is different from asking general questions. In Socratic Questioning, students are trained to think critically by way of asking reflective and probing questions that enable students to get to the evidentiary or rational foundation of a belief or explanation.

Bloom’s taxonomy suggests that thinking, as a learning activity, progresses in a hierarchy of stages, and is enhanced through a process in which one stage is mastered before another in a simple-to-complex order. The taxonomy builds on the premise that a cognitive function can be ordered into six levels. The mastery of each subsequent level depends upon learners’ ability to perform well at the previous level. For example, the ability to create, which is the highest level in the taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 67-68), can be gained only after the mastery of how information should be properly understood, applied in a context, analyzed further, and so on.

**Delivery Analysis**
The workshops will be organized in the most participatory way possible. Both the instructor and the participants will work closely as active teaching-learning partners. A folder will be prepared for each participant, which will carry handouts and reference readings related to the themes discussed above, and some necessary stationery.

Before introducing the materials, the participants will be engaged in a “thinking” and “reflecting” exercise with some probing questions. Then the discussion on the theme will begin relating it to the reflections of the participants. After each presentation, the participants will be encouraged to do “self-reflection”. This is to encourage them to see whether they could have taught a particular subject/theme differently. The delivery includes the instructor “talking” less and participants “doing” more. At the end, the participants will be engaged in an exercise in which they will answer a few questions checking their pre and post workshop experience.

**Project Plan**
The workshop in the Kathmandu valley will take place in the third week of September, when the university is closed for Dashain-Tihar vacation. The other two workshops will be organized in January/February 2013, during winter vacation.

**Design**
The overall purpose of the workshops is to inform the participants of the importance of critical thinking and how to promote such thinking at secondary level school teaching, particularly among students of grades 8-10.
**Objective**

1. By the end of the workshop, the workshop participants will be able to formulate questions appropriately to enhance students’ critical thinking in their classroom situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Learning/Training Activity</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socratic Questioning</td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>Short reflective questions will be used (orally) throughout to assess if the participants have gained expected knowledge. To assess their skills or behavioural change, each will be given a list of questions from which to select those that stimulate critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Materials from CT Course</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific (Tailor-made) Handouts</td>
<td>Reflection, Paraphrasing, and Comparing and Contrasting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Group-work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions (that promote critical thinking)</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. By the end of the workshop, the workshop participants will be able to explain at least three of the six stages of Bloom’s Taxonomy, and what action verbs define these stages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Learning/Training Activity</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Materials from CT Course</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>Oral and written question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloom’s taxonomy</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of action verbs that help teach each hierarchy of the taxonomy</td>
<td>Comparing and Contrasting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group-Work</td>
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</table>

**Rationale for Sequence**

These workshops are planned to introduce basic ideas of critical thinking among government school teachers, and help them develop some skills necessary to promote this subject as a teaching-learning activity in the schools. Unless the teachers are aware of the value of it and armed with basic skills, such as questioning, they cannot be expected to teach in a way that builds the habit of critical thinking. The selection of English language teachers at government schools is important as they work in rural areas where there are no references and resources other than the teachers. The students learn from what they do and how they do it. Any input given to these teachers will have far reaching implications. The contents selected introduce basic concepts of critical thinking. These are selected with the expectation that after the workshops the participants will be motivated to explore further in this area. Hence, these introductory workshops are necessary to initiate the first step towards critical thinking in a situation like Nepal.

The first topic of the workshop will deal with Socratic Questioning, followed by Bloom’s Taxonomy. Each session will be two hours long, starting at 10 in the morning and coming to an end at 4 in the afternoon. There will be a lunch break of one and a half hours, and two tea/coffee breaks of 15 minutes each.

**Development**

Training plan based on Gagne’s “Nine Events of Instruction”

1. **Gain attention (10 minutes)**

   In a U-shape setting, the training participants, 25 in total, will find a folder containing reference materials on critical thinking, a note pad, a ball pen, a pencil and an eraser. The participants will be asked to skim the materials for a few minutes, and close the folder. This is to help them satisfy their curiosity as to what the folder would contain, and draw their attention fully to the workshop.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Inform learners of objectives</th>
<th>The participants, who will already have had some knowledge of the workshop, will be encouraged to think about and suggest what should be the specific objective(s) of the workshop. Based on what they suggest, an objective will be worked out in a manner that will harmonize with the objective(s) the trainer has set for the workshop.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Stimulate recall of prior learning</td>
<td>The participants will be asked a few questions related to the workshop, the documents included in the folder and the objective just worked out. These simple questions engage the participants in brainstorming and thinking freely, which is a way to promote critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Present the content</td>
<td>The content of the workshop will be presented relating to the ideas explored during brainstorming and other “events of instructions” discussed above. The first theme of the workshop will be Socratic Questioning. Following a brief history of the theme, the participants will have the importance of such questioning explained, and will engage in the exercise of such questioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Guided learning</td>
<td>Workshop participants are told that the workshop will be participatory, in which both the instructor and the participants engage equally in the learning process. They will also be reminded of the expected outcome from the workshop – that they will be able to frame “critical thinking” questions which they can use in their situations. The learning will also include small group work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Elicit performance (practice)</td>
<td>The participants will practice “critical thinking questions” that they can use in their teaching and learning contexts. The practice takes place after a discussion session presented by the moderator.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Provide feedback</td>
<td>The performance of each participant will be reacted to with appropriate feedback. It will be appreciative and constructive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Assess performance</td>
<td>To assess the performance of the participants, self-reflection and peer-assessment methods will be used. Each participant will, first, be asked to write two learning points from the workshop and read those out. Another participant will be encouraged to comment briefly on the presentation. This is to reinforce the learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Enhance retention and transfer</td>
<td>The participants will be engaged to develop a lesson plan to achieve the following objective: “By the end of the session, students of class nine of government schools will be enabled to write down three questions that promote thinking critically both in the classroom and in their everyday life.”</td>
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</table>

**Implementation Checklist**

**Items**
- Folders
- Notepads
- Ball Pens
- Pencils
- Erasers
- White Board
- Board Markers
- Flip Charts
- Meta Cards
- Two Snacks
- One Lunch
- Refreshments
- Camera
Tasks
- Sitting Arrangement – U-shape Sitting
- Production of 25 sets of handouts
- Preparation in Meta Cards Sample Critical Thinking Questions
- Observation
- Note Taking – of Participant Interaction and Engagement
- Giving Feedback
- Taking Pictures

Evaluation
The evaluation will consist of both formative and summative processes. Formative evaluation will be integral to the workshop. It will take place by way of reflection, peer feedback, group work, and feedback from the moderator. Summative evaluation will be done with the help of a structured questionnaire, in which the participants will respond to thematic questions and also comment on their pre-workshop and post-workshop knowledge, and the quality of the action plan each participant will produce.

On completion of each workshop, the moderator will produce a report. Among other things, the report will comment on the progress of each participant, and the moderator’s overall observation about the workshop as a whole. The report will be shared with NELTA, concerned District Education Offices, and workshop participants.