

## EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS IN OMAN'S HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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**Abstract.** *This paper addresses the need to ensure that higher education is suitably adapted to equip students with effective skills, which are regarded key requirements for a successful professional career in the 21st century, and draws attention to the importance of these skills. In more detail, it reports on the result of a study conducted across higher education providers in the Sultanate of Oman that focused on teachers' critical thinking skills' conceptual knowledge and understanding; their views and perception of critical thinking in relation to the English language classroom; and the teaching and professional development of critical thinking. Findings reveal that teachers perceive the importance of employing critical thinking skills in their teaching, yet they lack support in their implementation. Both at an institutional level and in terms of professional development, there is scope for improving how critical thinking is incorporated in English language classrooms, instructional approaches and teaching materials.*

**Key words:** *critical thinking, problem-solving, Oman, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, teachers' professional development*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The process of development in thinking is “a gradual process requiring plateaus of learning and just plain hard work” (Paul & Elder, 2000, p.40). According to Paul and Elder (2000), “it is not possible to become an excellent thinker simply because one wills it. Changing one's habits of thought is a long-range project, happening over years, not weeks or months. The essential traits of a critical thinker require an extended period of development” (p.40), and the role of higher education in this endeavor is significant.

Acknowledging the given importance of English as the language for employable criteria (Livingston, 2012), the study was designed to answer the question about how critical thinking and problem-solving skills are taught and what approaches, strategies and techniques are used by the English language teachers.

The aim of this paper is to report on the first phase of a study supported by The Research Council in Oman that focuses on teachers' perceptions into how critical thinking and problem solving skills necessary for the 21st century are currently integrated in curricula and taught in Oman's higher education institutions. Subsequent phases will

address students' and employment market shareholders' perceptions. In more detail, the paper discusses data collected in various tertiary institutions across the Sultanate of Oman under three areas of investigation: teachers' critical thinking skills' knowledge and understanding; their views and perception of critical thinking in relation to the English language classroom; and the teaching and professional development of critical thinking.

## 2. CRITICAL THINKING AND LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES AND APPROACHES

Undoubtedly, critical thinking is one of the most important tools of inquiry and resources in one's personal and civic life. The development of critical thinking skills among learners is among common educational goals across a variety of educational contexts and subject areas. This educational goal gives special importance and value to the process of learning and the critical role of teaching (Bondarevskaya, 2001). As Ray Marshall and Marc Tucker rightly contend in their book "Thinking for a living: Education and the wealth of nations" (1992): "The future now belongs to societies that organize themselves for learning... nations that want high incomes and full employment must develop policies that emphasize the acquisition of knowledge and skills by everyone, not just a select few" (p.4).

According to Facione (1990), the "ideal critical thinker is habitually inquisitive, well-informed, trustful of reason, open-minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation, honest in facing personal biases, prudent in making judgments, willing to reconsider, clear about issues, orderly in complex matters, diligent in seeking relevant information, reasonable in the selection of criteria, focused in inquiry, and persistent in seeking results which are as precise as the subject and the circumstances of inquiry permit" (p.2). However, the question has always been about how to develop this ideal individual with the intellectual roots of critical thinking being traceable in the teaching practice and vision of Socrates 2,500 years ago (A brief history, n.d.). This question has not lost its significance today. Moreover, in various local educational contexts it may take on different shapes, integrate broader scientific knowledge and so many disciplines (e.g. philosophical base, psychological knowledge, etc.), culturally specific educational and practice-based research traditions, and individual scientific endeavors. Therefore, every research endeavor that contributes to the process of education that creates conditions and situations for critical thinking development is crucial for the growth of global knowledge, pedagogy and education.

In their article Rosefsky and Opfer (2012) discuss the higher-order thinking skills which they believe students ought to be learning in the 21st century. The authors offer nine steps to increase students' learning outcomes regarding various thinking skills including critical thinking and problem-solving. Topics include the use of educational technology, the practice of making curriculum contextually relevant to students' lives, as well as the encouragement of learning transfer in which students can transfer their skills and knowledge to different environments. The article starts with a reference to the movement toward 21st-century skills and seven survival skills proposed by Tony Wagner (2008). The authors argue that "regardless of the skills included or the terms used to describe them, all 21st-century skills definitions are relevant to aspects of contemporary life in a complex world. Most focus on similar types of complex thinking, learning, and communication skills and all are more demanding to teach and learn than rote skills. These abilities are also commonly referred to as higher-order thinking skills, deeper learning outcomes, and complex thinking and communication skills" (p.8). According to the authors, "learning

scientists have taught us nine lessons relative to teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. All of the lessons are about how students learn 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and how pedagogy can address their needs” (p.9), i.e., make it relevant; teach through the disciplines; develop thinking skills; encourage learning transfer; teach students how to learn; address misunderstandings directly; treat teamwork like an outcome; exploit technology to support learning and foster creativity.

First of all, Rosefsky and Opfer (2012) believe that teachers should make curriculum relevant to students' lives. They contend that “learning should occur through the disciplines, including native and foreign languages, hard and social sciences, mathematics and the arts. In addition to learning the knowledge of the discipline, students also must learn the skills associated with the production of knowledge within the discipline (p.10). Rosefsky and Opfer (2012) stress the importance of thinking skills and simultaneous development of lower- and higher-order thinking skills. Encouragement of learning transfer is considered. According to Rosefsky and Opfer (2012), “students must apply the skills and knowledge they gain in one discipline to another and what they learn in school to other areas of their lives” (p.10), and English language teaching and learning are not an exception.

A number of English language educators and linguists have investigated the relationship between language acquisition and cognitive development. One of the areas which has been explored is the language teaching approaches and their role in promoting students' critical thinking skills. Alagozlu (2007) argues that “since the traditional instructional process urges the students to receive ready-made information without questioning, they [students] are not encouraged to think critically, which is probably transferred into ELT classes as well” (p. 185). However, other approaches like the content-based approach is considered as an effective technique to develop students' critical thinking skills while teaching them language skills (Brinton et al, 1989; Kusaka & Robertson, 2006; Liaw, 2007; Stoler, 1997). Content-based is the “concurrent study of language and subject matter, with the form and sequence of language presentation dictated by content materials” (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989, p.2). According to Stoller (1997), it is believed that a content-based language teaching approach is the effective way of teaching higher-order thinking skills due to the of infusion of language in teaching all the subject matters and the close connections between the oral and written language and thinking.

Both content-based instruction and critical thinking activities are intrinsically motivating (Brown, 2007). Using a content-based approach brings different and interesting topics from different subject matters into the ESL/EFL classroom. In addition, this approach offers teachers opportunities for using different activities which focus on students' learning capabilities instead of focusing solely on their linguistic abilities (Chamot, 1995). Brown (2007) states that “content-based classrooms have the potential of increasing intrinsic motivation and empowerment, since students are focused on subject matter that is important to their lives... their own competence and autonomy as intelligent individuals capable of actually doing something with their new language” (p.56). Similarly, improving students' critical thinking skills motivates them “because it appeals to our innate desire for self-improvement” (Crocker & Bowden, 2010, p.3). Also, Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989) argue that content-based activities provide teachers with opportunities to stimulate students to think through using the target language.

Crocker and Bowden (2010) propose using a content-based approach as a way of merging the notional-functional approach and critical thinking in a language course. Both, notional-functional approach and critical thinking subject, share similar learning outcomes. According to Crocker and Bowden (2010), “self-correction, clarifying ideas,

making distinctions, giving reasons, formulating appropriate questions, making connections and comparing” are examples of learning outcomes which can be found in either discipline (p.3). The only difference is that in critical thinking the students are expected to improve their cognitive skills, whereas the notional-functional approach aims to improve students’ ability “to express or articulate these cognitive skills” (Crocker & Bowden, 2010, p.3). Hence, combining the two disciplines through a content-based program places more emphasis on critical thinking in the language classrooms. Such an approach allows a direct instruction on critical thinking skills while achieving the intended notional-functional learning outcomes.

Learning strategy instruction is also considered as an effective approach to teach critical thinking skills in the English language classroom. Language teachers can promote their students’ critical thinking through teaching them some learning strategies. In doing so, students can develop their metacognitive awareness. Teachers can encourage students to describe and share their own learning techniques and strategies. According to Reid (2000), the best way to develop students’ metacognitive skills is by making them consciously aware of the learning strategies they use when attempting different tasks. Thus, explicit instruction on learning strategies is needed. Chamot (1995) suggests a framework for building a community of thinkers in the language classroom. This framework consists of five kinds of instruction to help students demonstrate and improve their thinking:

1. Recognizing and building on students’ prior of knowledge,
2. Providing meaningful learning tasks,
3. Engaging in interactive teaching and learning,
4. Focusing on learning processes and strategies,
5. Helping students to evaluate their own thinking (p.16).

Kabilan (2000) emphasizes the importance of incorporating critical thinking in the second language classroom. He argues that the communicative approach, which places emphasis on using the language rather than learning about the language, does not really prepare students to be proficient in the target language. He strongly believes that learners should be able to employ creative and critical thinking when using the language. Only then can learners become proficient language users. According to Kabilan (2000), teachers are the primary element needed to produce critical thinkers in language classrooms. As Lipman (2003) points out, it is teachers’ responsibility to promote their students’ critical thinking. Teachers should change their attitudes towards their students, pedagogy and themselves as teachers. They should respect learners’ individuality, listen to their opinions and build mutual relationships with them. In addition, he proposes engaging learners in problem-solving situations and decision-making processes. More importantly, teachers need to act as facilitators and guides and lead their students to be critical thinkers. Similarly, Travin and Al-Arishi (1991) argue that the communicative approach disregards the importance of reflection in the target language. They state that “many activities in the communicative language teaching classroom discourage reflection and contemplation and the emphasis is on conspicuous action and spontaneous response. Conspicuous action tends to be more highly valued than the need of all participants to pause unilaterally and stand back from and reflect on what they are doing” (p.10). Therefore, students are not given opportunities to develop their metacognitive awareness when they engage in the communicative tasks.

### 3. STUDY

English language teachers' perceptions toward critical thinking skills and its use in the classroom were investigated using a quantitative approach. The data is used to explore the effectiveness of explicit and implicit training of critical thinking and problem solving skills within higher education institutions in Oman. The study was conducted in higher education institutions in different governorates of Oman, including governorates of Muscat, Dhofar, Al Buraimi, Dakhiliyah, Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South, Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South. These higher education institutions mostly use English as a medium of instruction. For example, Sultan Qaboos University uses English as a medium of instruction in all its science based colleges and some specializations in the Colleges of Law, Education, Arts and Social Sciences.

The study was designed to take interpretative approach that employed meaning-based forms of data analysis and relied on linguistic data (Elliott & Timulak, 2005). Klein and Myers (1999) explain that interpretative approach is based on an assumption that "our knowledge of reality is gained only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents, tools, and other artifacts" (p.69). In Al-Riyami's (2015) view, the use of interpretive approach makes it possible to conduct a study in its natural setting" (p.413). Walsham (1993) argues that interpretive methods of research start from the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction by human actors.

The fundamental basis of the study was the setting up and conducting fieldwork. Plummer (2001) points out that in life histories, obtaining relevant information can be accomplished by chance, luck and being pragmatic. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggest purposeful sampling. In our study, the data was obtained from the sampling of English language teachers at higher education institutions. Only teachers who had experience of teaching in either foundation or credit-bearing English courses offered by these institutions were invited. Such an approach to study allowed exploring personal histories and experiences in a specific context of tertiary education level institutions.

#### 3.1. Participants

The study covered a sample of 293 teachers from different higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. The majority of respondents (81%) were non-Omani; gender was covered almost equally at 51% male and 49% female. Age groupings are as follows: 45.5% aged from 36-50 years; 31.7% aged over 50 years and 23% from 21-35 years. Seventy-one teachers had a master's degree, 14.5% had a bachelor's degree, and 13.4% had doctoral degrees, whereas 0.7% had a postdoctoral degree. Most respondents, (49%) specialized in English as a Second language and English as a Foreign language. Total of 21.5% specialized in language and literature, 5.3% in communication and only (1.5%) in the arts. There were 34% of the respondents who had more than 20 years' experience in teaching, and over half, (67%), had less than 10 years of experience in Oman. In addition, 71% were teaching at the foundation level, 38% at post foundation level, (22%) were teaching on bachelor degree programs, while 3.8% were teaching at the master's level.

### 3.2. Instrument

The instrument was a questionnaire both in paper and online. This instrument was chosen as “a matter of asking a sample of people from a population a set of questions and using the answers from the population” (Fowler, 2014, p. ix) to investigate language teachers’ responses to the concept of critical thinking and its use in the classroom. The online questionnaire was administered on the wiggio.com platform. Though the online questionnaire was conducted anonymously, each teacher was assigned a code name [P – participant] and an identifying number to differentiate their responses.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections: teacher critical thinking skills’ knowledge and understanding; teachers’ views and perceptions of critical thinking and the English language classroom; critical thinking skills teaching and teacher professional development; and a section relating to the participants’ demographic details. It included definitions of critical thinking for participants to choose; a section to write their personal definition of critical thinking; ranking of one to ten in relation to the importance of words associated with critical thinking and problem solving; ‘yes/no/not sure’ responses in relation to the English language classroom and professional development; Likert-type 5-point scale ranging from very adequate to not present regarding the emphasis of critical thinking in the institution they were teaching in and with regard to effective methods of teaching critical thinking in the English classroom; a ranking of skills related to critical thinking in each of the core English skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening; choosing items from a list as the most important in developing in critical thinking skills in students; and demographic information. The statements in the questionnaire were based on the most common contributory factors to the state of critical thinking teaching in higher education in the literature detailed in Paul (2004). In Paul’s (2004) view, most college faculty at all levels “lack a substantive concept of critical thinking, believe that they sufficiently understand it, and assume they are already teaching students it” (n.p.). Paul (2004) explains that “when faculty have a vague notion of critical thinking, or reduce it to a single-discipline model (as in teaching critical thinking through a “logic” or a “study skills” paradigm), it impedes their ability to identify ineffective, or develop more effective, teaching practices” (n.p.).

### 3.3. Procedure

Prior to the questionnaire being administered in higher education institutions in different areas of Oman, the instrument was piloted online in the Language Centre at Sultan Qaboos University where the researchers work. Here, the participants of the study responded to the online survey during and after the in-house professional development courses organized by the Language Centre. Different team members visited colleges and universities in other directorates of Oman and when possible introduced the research project in a brief workshop to faculty before administering the paper based questionnaire. Participants’ anonymity was guaranteed.

Data was analyzed using version 23 of the IBM SPSS Statistical software, depending on the distribution of the variable of interest. Categorical data are presented as frequencies and percentages which enable large amounts of data to be simplified, and mean was used to measure the center of a numerical data set in analyzing important words associated with critical thinking.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of critical thinking skills

This section refers to teachers' knowledge and understanding of critical thinking skills and reports words which the participants associated with critical thinking and problem-solving skills in relation to teaching and learning. There were 178 participants (65,9%) aligning critical thinking with making a judgement, whereas 71 teachers (26,3%) relate the skill to thinking and 21 (7,8%) see it as a habit that is developed. This illustrates that the majority of respondents consider critical thinking as requiring a position of evaluation in order to make a judgement. This corresponds to the view emphasized in studies by Ennis (1992), Facione (2010), Mertes (1991). According to these studies, critical thinking requires informed judgment from the reader, listener, viewer or thinker by linking their cognitive skill with the disposition to employ this skill, meaning that the cognitive aspect alone is not enough. The affective process is also necessary to activate and guide the behavioral where "previously held belief is confirmed or a new belief is established" (Huitt, 1998, p.4). Put more simply, critical thinking involves both the disposition to engage in its use and the ability to employ it (Commeyras, 1993).

There were many words associated with critical thinking and problem solving skills teaching and learning. Participants were asked to prioritize the following words: 'collaboration', 'innovation', 'technology', 'culture', 'community engaged', 'interaction', 'communication', 'autonomous learning' and 'reflection', as they perceive their relevance to critical thinking and problem solving.

Table 1 Words associated with critical thinking and problem-solving

Word	Percentage
Technology	52.6%
Community engaged	50.9%
Culture	47.0%
Collaboration	43.6%
Innovation	38.5%
Interaction	38.4%
Reflection	37.5%
Autonomous learning	35.5%

Findings indicate (see Table 1) that just over half the teachers ranked 'technology' and 'community engaged' (51.1%, 50.9% respectively) as the most important words associated with critical thinking and problem solving skills.

A further list of words were provided by participants including: 'prejudice', 'applying', 'analyzing', 'synthesizing', 'conceptualizing', 'awareness', 'flexibility', 'metacognition', 'outside the box', 'experiential', 'perspective', 're-positioning', 'Bloom's taxonomy', 'listening', 'negotiating', 'extrapolation', 'expanding', 'neutrality', 'modify', 'high order thinking', 'being judgment', 'achieving', 'construction', 'open minded', 'curiosity', 'skepticism', 'structuring', 'building', 'alternative', 'comprehending', 'inference', 'implication'. This variety of terms in relation to critical thinking reflects the plethora of definitions found in the field.

#### 4.2. Teachers' views and perceptions: critical thinking skills and the English language classroom

This section focuses on teachers' views and perceptions about promoting and integrating critical thinking skills in the English language classroom. The majority of respondents (93.4%) agree that critical thinking should be a consideration in English language teaching and that it is beneficial for students (93.2%). On the other hand, roughly two thirds (67%) see it as a priority while less than half refer to critical thinking explicitly in their lesson plans (44.6%).

Teachers evaluated how adequately their institution promoted critical thinking mostly as "somewhat adequate". This 'fence-sitting' option may be most chosen because participants are not fully confident with how critical thinking is addressed within the academic categories stated. While most categories follow a similar response pattern, how critical thinking is addressed 'out of class' indicates a different spread indicating that this area is not dealt with within institutions.

Tables 2-5 reflect the respondents' choices from a list of options including skills and activities that they consider as highly promoting critical thinking in a particular sub-skill. Table 2, for example, shows teachers' perceptions of activities that promote critical thinking and problem solving in teaching reading in the English language classroom. (83.9%) of the respondents highly recommend 'analyzing'. 'Making inferences from the text' and 'evaluating' are also reflected as effective ways for promoting critical thinking in reading at 78.7%, 73.1% respectively. These relate to higher order thinking skills in Bloom's Taxonomy. On the other hand, 'reading aloud' is shown as the lowest effective way to promote critical thinking in teaching reading in the English language classroom (8%).

Table 2 Promoting critical thinking in teaching reading

Teaching activities	Percentage
Analyzing	83.9%
Making inferences	78.7%
Evaluating	73.1%
Reflecting	68.2%
Distinguishing facts from opinions	63.6%
Linking ideas to wider field	60.1%
Recognizing bias	54.5%
Identifying main ideas and details	43.7%
Learning new vocabulary	28.3%
Reading aloud	8.0%

In determining ways that teachers consider as promoting critical thinking in teaching writing in the English language classroom, Table 3 shows that the majority of the teachers (77.3%) highly considered 'writing analytical essays' as the most effective, while 75.2% said that 'evaluating evidence' is important. In contrast, (13.8%) evaluated 'learning spelling' as the least effective way to promote critical thinking in teaching writing in their classroom.



Table 3 Promoting critical thinking in teaching writing

Teaching activities	Percentage
Writing analytical essay	77.3%
Evaluating evidence	75.2%
Reflective journal writing	62.1%
Writing Compare and contrast essays	59.2%
Responding to comments on forums	53.5%
Summarizing	51.1%
Paraphrasing	48.9%
Sequencing sections of a text	33.7%
Note taking	28.7%
Learning new vocabulary	19.9%
Learning spelling	13.8%

Table 4 highlights 'justifying an opinion', 'engaging in debates' and 'reflective interactions' (80.4%, 78% and 71.7% respectively) as the most effective ways of promoting critical thinking in teaching speaking in English language classroom. On the other hand, (4.7%) of respondents indicated that 'reciting a memorized passage' activity is viewed as the least effective.

Table 4 Promoting critical thinking in teaching speaking

Teaching activities	Percentage
Justifying an opinion	80.4%
Debates	77.9%
Reflective interactions	71.7%
Class discussions	65.6%
Persuading others	62.3%
Constructing & asking questions	54.7%
Answering questions	38.4%
Oral Presentation	35.5%
Reporting	25.0%
Learning new vocabulary	18.8%
Reciting a memorized passage	4.7%

'Constructing and asking questions' is considered an effective way in teaching critical thinking by a substantial group of study participants (54,7%). The importance of questions in relation to critical thinking is highlighted in the study by Elder and Paul (2003). Traver (1998) suggests that the power of well-thought-out questioning techniques, especially the use of guiding questions, can provide intellectual focus and coherence. Furthermore, student-developed questions can enhance comprehension by fostering a synthesis of concepts through practical application, increased motivation, and focusing on main ideas (cited in Gauthier, 2000, p.239).

Table 5 refers to teachers' perceptions of ways to promote critical thinking skills in listening in the English language classroom. The majority of respondents chose 'evaluating the credibility of an argument/opinion' and 'evaluating' as the most effective methods (75.9%, 72.3% respectively). Six of the listed options rate over 50%. Activities such as

'gap-fill exercises' and 'gaining literal meaning' ranked at less than 30%; both activities would be considered lower order skills. Surprisingly, 'note-taking skills' records 24.8%, while this may appear to be a mechanical task, it could be argued that a degree of judgement is necessary in evaluating which information is relevant when summarizing or paraphrasing.

Table 5 Promoting critical thinking in teaching listening

Teaching activities	Percentage
Evaluating the credibility of an argument/opinion	75.9%
Evaluating	72.3%
Having an understanding of bias / subjectivity	67.2%
Comprehending connoted meaning (unstated)	66.1%
Reflecting	60.9%
Identifying an opinion	55.1%
Summarizing	42.3%
Identifying main ideas and details	40.5%
Comprehending denoted meaning (literal)	29.9%
Note taking	24.8%
Gap fill completion	20.4%

The results related to teachers' perceptions of the activities aimed at developing students' critical thinking skills, clearly demonstrate that this should be done in an integrated context, rather than in separate skills. This corresponds with the study by Comley (1989) that suggests that critical thinking can be fostered by the interrelationship of reading, writing and discussion. While 'exploring concepts' activity ranked highest at 53.3% in ways to develop critical thinking in students, the next five in ranking relate to 'individual projects' (42,3%), 'group projects' (31,6) and 'team work' (34,6%), 'engaging in educational trips' (25%) and 'making links to other fields of study' (46,7%). This sense of valuing collaboration is reported as a skill necessary for preparing students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### 4.3. Teaching critical thinking skills and teacher professional development

This section reports how confident teachers feel about promoting critical thinking in their teaching and about linking content coverage to teaching critical thinking in English language classrooms. It also reports on teachers' experiences with professional development in teaching critical thinking.

The initial question relating to how teachers feel about promoting critical thinking in their English language teaching shows 75.8% are confident, 7.5% were not and 16.6% were not sure. Similar to their peers worldwide, most of the teachers who participated in the study, are also of the opinion that critical thinking and problem solving are essential 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies (Belghiti, El Kirat & Chana, 2016.).

The second item again asked teachers about their confidence in teaching critical thinking, but this question was in relation to how they are able to link it with content covered in the English class. The results, while similar, show a greater percentage of uncertainty with 68.8% feeling confident, 8% not confident and 23.5% not sure.

The third item asked teachers if they had had professional development in critical thinking. There, 41.9% reported that they had, and 58.1% indicated that they had had no professional development in this area. These results indicate a need for a nation-wide program of professional development to assist teachers in developing confidence and skills necessary to prepare and train students in this skill for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Previous results demonstrate teachers' perceptions of the importance of critical thinking, yet the result that close to 60% have had no professional development in this area supports the need for exposing this deficit with an end to providing resources in this field.

Following on, participants were asked about the methods they would chose to effectively integrate and promote critical thinking in the English classroom. According to teachers, practical ideas (48,9%), examples (35,9%) and workshops (44,1%) are more beneficial indicating that teachers prefer collaboration of ideas.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study demonstrate that teachers perceive the importance of employing critical thinking skills in their teaching, yet they lack support in their implementation. Both at an institutional level and in terms of professional development, there is scope for improving in terms of how in-service training and professional development is organized for teachers to sufficiently enhance their knowledge and understanding of the substantive concept of critical thinking, and incorporate it in English language classrooms across the Sultanate of Oman.

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