



New Student Orientation

By Davey Hoffman, ACU Scholars Programme Instructor

On March 4th, 2016, ACU received registration and consent to begin the Scholars Programme. With no delay, and with the help of the Family Legacy organization, the ACU Scholars Programme enrolment was filled. On March 19th, just two weeks after receiving registration, ACU held a day of orientation for the new students.

The purpose of the New Student Orientation Day was not only to give the new students the necessary expectation of what was to come in their first school year, but also to build a foundation of camaraderie and unity early on. This was accomplished through lectures on academics and scholarship, group discussions on issues that will affect the university, and games which brought everyone together.

The day began early Saturday morning with the new students, the future leaders of Zambia, walking through the ACU gate, each receiving their name badge and new student pack. As they gathered under the Olive Doke Pavilion, the day started with a brief time of worship. As the morning continued, the students were given a welcome address from Dr. Turnbull coupled with a discussion on biblical scholarship and an expectation for the Student Labour Programme. Dr. Turnbull's talk was followed by a welcome from the faculty given by Mr. Carlos Paul. The morning wrapped up with presentations on academics and the student code of conduct, ending with a library orientation by Ms. Kendra Hawley.

Some of the most underrated but most effective activities of the day were the icebreaker games held after the morning sessions. These were short games where groups of students had to compete against each other for a common goal. One such game was the blindfolded obstacle course. One at a time, blindfolded team members were guided by their team mates through an obstacle course to the finish line by giving verbal instructions only. They must rely heavily on trust and communication to complete the challenge. These games not only brought energy and enthusiasm to the day, but they also helped with building a team spirit among the group.



After a lunch break, the day slipped into the afternoon with a practical presentation of the Student Labour Programme. The students were given an explanation of the work that would be done, as well as how they would be split into groups. The prospects of the coming student Labour Programme were met by-and-large with enthusiasm.

The final major activity of the day was a session on cultural diversity. The first part of that came in the form of a simulation game that mirrored the practical implications of cross-cultural interactions. This was met with much enthusiasm and excitement. After going through the game for a while, everyone met for a discussion of cultural diversity based on what was experienced in the simulation game. The whole experience was to get the student body thinking about cultural diversity, and how to relate in a multi-cultural setting. Overall, the experience seemed positive, with an interactive and fruitful discussion followed by a final word of encouragement from Dean Tembo. This was a fruitful time, as ACU itself is a diversified community in itself.

The day came to a close with a time of prayer and refreshments served afterwards. Upon reflection, the student orientation day seems to have been a success. The new student body was not only given expectations for the Scholars Programme, but they were also given the opportunity to get to know one another and develop a passion and eagerness for the coming year. We are thankful that the day was an overall success, and we were able to take a full day to lay a foundation for the future; a future that now exists.

Sign up to receive monthly prayer update

ACU prayer update team: prayer@acu-zambia.com
ACU-ZAMBIA: www.acu-zambia.com

"...have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." 1 Peter 3:8

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The Importance of Critical Thinking in Africa

By Ronald Kalifungwa

I want to begin this article on the importance of critical thinking in Africa with a syllogism. It goes like this, "All human beings can think critically. All Africans are human beings. Therefore, all Africans can think critically." But can they? The answer to

this question must surely be, "Yes they can". But do they? And must they? These are the questions we must answer in this article. But before we do that, let us define what we mean by critical thinking.

Critical thinking has received a lot of attention from scholars and the literature is vast. In the process, it has generated many definitions. One of the best I have come across defines it as "... the intellectual disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising and or evaluating information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection and reasoning." Critical thinking is therefore concerned with information processing and can be viewed as a complex, purposive, judgemental (quality) higher order reasoning, which is usually devoted to critiquing information, problem solving and decision making. The goal is always to reach sound conclusions based on credible premises.

Do Africans think critically? There is no doubt that some do, however, it is also fair to observe that substantial numbers of others don't. They don't because it is supposedly un-African to do so particularly when it is being used to challenge traditions, positions and opinions informed by superstition, primordial thinking and blind faith or dogma. It would therefore appear that thinking africanly means suspension of thought, logic or common sense and continuance of thinking in spiritual, occultic or magical ways.

Almost as a way of underwriting this unintellectual tradition, Africa has over the years tended to design educational systems that do not promote critical thinking. A quick sampling of the curricula and class arrangements many education departments set for their schools and tertiary institutions, reveal that there is an over-emphasis on knowledge and recall (rote learning), a lack of or insufficient emphasis on critical thinking in the various course contents, poor knowledge of Critical Thinking by lecturers, poor training of students from the lower levels of education in critical skills, over-crowding in lecture rooms giving little or no time for useful interaction and questioning, over reliance on lecture methods without the old tutorial classes and an over-emphasis on certificates rather than skills acquired. In addition to this, universities and colleges these days pay little attention to co-curricular activities that promote critical thinking among the student population such as quiz and essay competitions, debates, public lectures and seminars by students, etc.

Matters for Prayer

- Pray for the salvation and maturation of the students in the Scholars Programme as they are hearing the gospel and being disciplined. Pray for the faculty as they strive to teach with excellence in all disciplines from a Biblical worldview.
- Pray for the process of accreditation by the Zambian Higher Education Authority of ACU's Diploma and Bachelors Programmes as application preparations are being made.
- ACU has a great need for someone to lead the Student Labour Programme. Please pray for someone generally skilled in various trades with business and leadership skills and a heart for discipleship who can raise support to serve with ACU in this critical role.
- Pray for Ben Kilian as he finishes up his PhD dissertation and begins raising support for he and his family to join ACU. Pray for the many Zambian brethren who will help ACU in the area of agriculture.
- Kendra Hawley has completed her commitment to an additional term with ACU as the Librarian. Please pray for her as she adjusts to life back in Canada and seeks the Lord's direction in serving to Him.
- Please pray for a librarian with a Master's degree who can raise support to come and work with ACU.
- Please pray for ongoing efforts to find a sufficient water supply through a borehole on the Chisamba campus.
- Pray for efforts underway to initiate a significant campaign to raise the needed \$2.5 million for Phase 1 construction at the Chisamba Campus.

Matters for Praise

- Rejoice for the joyful students at the Ibex Hills Campus excited by what they are being taught in the Scholars Programme, through the Student Labour Programme and in all of the supra-curricular activities.
- We thank God that the shipping container for conversion to a computer lab facility was delivered and safely manoeuvred into position in the pavilion as part of the Student Labour Programme. Pray for the upcoming work incorporating the students in the conversion project.
- Mr. Prashant Thakkar, ACU's new Office Manager, has been a tremendous help in getting the office better organised and moving towards more efficient operations.
- ACU is very grateful for the KBC Mission Conference donation that was received in-full for the Chisamba Campus entryway project. Please pray for a Construction Manager who can raise support to lead the work.

The Importance of Critical Thinking (Cont.)

To the extent that such mystical thinking and habits clog the African mind, and to the extent that Critical Thinking is not actively being encouraged, to that extent it can be said that Africans do not think critically.

But must Africans think critically? Yes of course, and for the following reasons:

- a) Critical thinking will lead to the retention of their dignity as creatures who are made in the image of a God who reasons and who through the application of intelligence created all that exists. To reduce themselves to incarnations of the mystical and magical, is for Africans to degrade themselves to the level of creatures with no minds.
- b) Critical thinking will lead to the rejection of mystical and other ritualistic and religious nonsense that dominates the mental space of many Africans and which has done little or nothing to elevate their dignity and to install a holistic development that has eluded the continent of Africa even in the contemporary world. When the west rejected ideas that were rooted in Greek mythological thinking and in Aristotelian authoritarian ideas, they began to make progress both in the fields of science and technology. In the same way Africa, through a critical application of her mind should delete ideas and practices that halt her noetic activity and consign her to a self imposed perpetual Dark Age and backwardness.
- c) Critical-cum-creative thinking is in itself an injection of a resource that will bring untold benefits to the continent. This resource, which hitherto has been vitiated by elders (older males) in African communities, is the desideratum of meaningful or holistic development. Leaders in Africa therefore need to adopt an attitude which allows for a free reign of critical and creative disposition, which other community members, such as the youth, women, men and children can use as a catalyst for development of the continent. When God created Adam in his image, he among other things created him free to apply his mind in the execution of the cultural mandate. Adam would not have been in a position to subdue the earth and to have dominion over it if his mind was not free to think and create. Similarly, the African mind must be left free to explore and create after the image of its maker and not be beholden to a tradition of non-thinking, if it would burst at the seams of non-development.

Western civilisation (which is the most advanced in the world), at her best, believed in critical thinking (based on the Bible). This critical use of the mind led to progress in just about every field of human endeavour. When Africa thinks critically, she will no doubt see the advancement she craves.

Conclusion

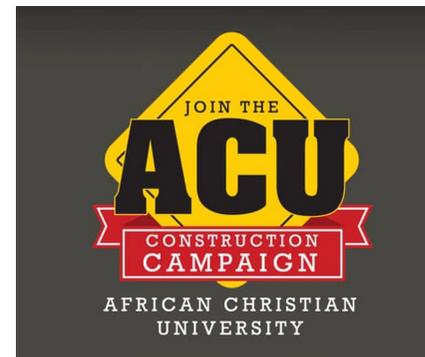
If Africa must make the highly desired advancement in democracy, science and other sectors, she must imbibe critical thinking. This in practice will mean educational managers seeing to it that teacher education curricula and others are improved to accommodate critical thinking skills in order to equip student teachers with necessary skills to enable them to train youths to become human capitals useful to themselves and to the nation.

It is not without reason that the African Christian University is prioritising critical thinking. Critical thinking of course is not an isolated goal unrelated to other important goals in education. Rather, as someone has put it, "it is a seminal goal which, done well, simultaneously facilitates a rainbow of other ends. It is best conceived, therefore, as the hub around which all other educational ends cluster. For example, as students learn to think more critically, they become more proficient at historical, scientific, and mathematical thinking. Finally, they develop skills, abilities, and values crucial to success in everyday life". ACU will be training students in critical thinking for all of life. Critical thinking is a skill needed by all in life: leaders, followers, professionals, businessmen, market vendors, young and old, men and women.

At ACU therefore, the type of curriculum designed, its quality and the instructional delivery, will be that which accommodates critical thinking skills which we believe are germane for manpower development. When students become good thinkers, there is a chance that inventors and job creators will arise from them with benefits to the individuals and the African nation(s).

All of this assumes, of course, that those who teach have a solid grounding in critical thinking and in the teaching strategies essential to it. For teachers who are entrusted with producing future leaders and manpower for every nation, it is even quintessential. You will do well to pray for those who are called to teach at ACU.

1. ERIC Digest, (1988). Critical Thinking Skills and Teacher Education. [Online]. <http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-929/critical>
2. Schaferman, S.D. (1991). An Introduction to Critical Thinking. [Online]. <http://www.freeinquiry.com/criticalthinking.html>
3. 1. MES van den Berg, Christian reasoning and the art of argumentation (Pretoria Unisa Press :2010)
4. <http://www.criticalthinking.org/professionaldev/seminar-strand-think-tank-cfm#foundation>



Check out our
new construction video!
<https://vimeo.com/159059861>

STUDENT QUOTES



"Sir, I just want to thank you for everything here. I came here thinking this was very small. I know different now. This is the biggest thing that has ever happened to me. Every day is so big!"

- Sinos Mufwaya



"Before coming to this school, I was skeptical about God, but watching that video in class has changed my mind."

- Richard Mabenga