

Book Review



Jane Bottomley, Pat Cartney, Steven Pryjmachuk, *Critical Thinking Skills for Your Social Work Degree.*

Critical Publishing, St Albans, UK 2019, 88 P ISBN: 978-1-912508-67-9

“Critical Thinking Skills for Your Social Work Degree,” authored by Jane Bottomley, Pat Cartney, and Steven Pryjmachuk, is an invaluable addition to the “Critical Study Skills for Social Workers Series.” This book serves as a practical guide designed to equip social work trainees and young professionals with the essential critical thinking skills necessary for both their academic pursuits and professional practice. The authors aim to help readers develop a critical mindset that enables them to understand, reflect upon, and interpret the complex world around them.

The book is meticulously crafted with straightforward language, making it accessible to its target audience. It includes numerous practical examples, tasks, reflections, and case studies that illustrate the theoretical foundations of reflective practice. The theoretical foundation and practical examples revolve around the social work practice as it directly envisages more impactful intervention in social work issues. Thus, these activities are designed to help social work trainees internalize the competencies required to become effective social workers. The authors deal with both “reflections in action” and “reflection on action” to provide the deep qualitative upgradation of social work practice to reflective social work practice. The authors suggest that a social worker should have critical engagement with the existing knowledge and practice to open up newer perspectives. Moreover, the book provides language tools that assist learners in articulating their reflections with precision, encouraging them to engage in reading and writing critically. This engagement fosters a unique voice among academicians and practitioners, grounded in a deep understanding of social work issues.

The first chapter lays the groundwork for understanding critical thinking and its significance in social work practice. It emphasizes the importance of questioning the information received, drawing on Hegel’s dialectic

method. The chapter discusses how critical reflection and analysis are vital competencies for social workers, enabling them to make informed professional decisions. By reflecting critically on their practice, social workers can enhance the effectiveness and impact of their services.

In the second chapter, the authors introduce major reflective frameworks and provide a comparative analysis to offer an integrated understanding of the reflection process. They include specific exercises designed to help readers analyze their reflections using these frameworks. Additionally, the chapter offers language cues to aid learners in developing systematic reflective practices. This structured approach to reflection is crucial for continuous professional growth and development.

The third chapter focuses on the skills required for critical reading. The authors stress the importance of selecting credible sources, a fundamental aspect of engaging critically with literature. They offer practical guidance on how to choose relevant books and journal articles that align with the learner’s thematic focus. Through insightful exercises, the chapter explains the process of scrutinizing, synthesizing, and constructing a coherent research narrative. This approach helps learners develop a discerning eye for quality sources, which is essential for academic and professional integrity.

The fourth and final chapter addresses the nuances of critical writing. It highlights the critical use of language, emphasizing the development of voice, stance, and argument unique to the individual writer. The authors argue that the backbone of a critical essay lies in the argument formed by the author, which should reflect their unique perspective on the issue. This chapter guides readers through the process of crafting well-argued, reflective essays that stand out in academic and professional contexts.

The expected outcome of this book is to enable social work trainees to form critical viewpoints on various issues

by using credible and relevant sources, synthesizing them, and expressing their insights with a transformed voice. The book promotes learner autonomy by equipping social workers to critically approach the issues around them to take a position to uphold the standards of their helping profession. While achieving these competencies may seem challenging, the exercises provided by the authors are well-suited to inculcate critical thinking skills in social workers.

“Critical Thinking Skills for Your Social Work Degree” is highly recommended as a resource book for social work instructors and practice educators. It is also

an essential tool for young social workers, supporting their ongoing professional development. The book’s focus on critical thinking and reflective practice ensures that readers are well-prepared to navigate the complexities of social work with a thoughtful and informed approach.

Jolly John Odathakkal

Research Scholar, Department of Social Work
Rajagiri College of Social Sciences (Autonomous),
Kochi, Kerala, India
orcid Id:0000-0003-1088-3508