

Nurturing Critical Thinking vs. Fostering Moral Competence: psychological perspectives on theory and measurement of both concepts and their implications for education

In my keynote speech, I will apply Georg Lind's Dual-Aspects model of morality to various conceptions of critical thinking. According to Piaget (1976) and Lind (2019), behaviour comprises two fundamental aspects: the affective aspect and the cognitive aspect.

The affective aspect refers to the content of behaviour, while the cognitive aspect pertains to its structure. Critical thinking is often described as reasoned, reflective thinking (cognitive aspect), which involves a commitment to use reason in the formulation of our beliefs (affective aspect) (McPeck, 1981).

Regarding the Dual-Aspect model, we can conceptualize the similarities and differences between critical thinking and moral competence approaches. This distinction of aspects, which can be separately described but are objectively inseparable, is crucial for understanding and measuring both concepts and their underlying theories.

I will emphasize the important question: How well do questionnaires measure critical thinking and moral competence (construct validity)? To illustrate, I will introduce the Moral Competence Test (MCT), which measures moral competence. Good construct validity of test instruments is essential when evaluating, for example, the quality of learning environments (Schillinger, 2006; Hemmerling, 2014) or the effects of teacher training.

To highlight the interconnections and differences between critical thinking and moral competence, I will provide practical examples from the context of small and medium-sized enterprises in Germany.