

# Education for what? The compelling case for critical thinking

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Philosophers and entrepreneurs are both neglected, it appears. Now both are demanding due recognition in our education system as pivotal elements of the core curriculum – pertinent subjects for 21st century students.

And so the [National Council for Curriculum and Assessment](#) is drafting plans for a short philosophy course in the new [Junior Cycle](#). And Ibec, representing business and entrepreneurs, has published a paper suggesting the mainstreaming of entrepreneurship throughout education to equip the young for the changing world of work.

What both propositions have in common is the idea that education needs transformation at the meta-level – both subjects must not be compartmentalised but mainstreamed throughout the curriculum. As Ibec argues, echoing the philosophers, education critically needs “an infusion of entrepreneurial thinking into the non-business disciplines such as arts, humanities and science, and at primary and secondary school level.”

The idea is not just to teach entrepreneurial or philosophical technique, but to transform students and their approach to study, to infuse all study with critical thinking. “It’s important to emphasise that one can teach philosophy without fostering a philosophical attitude – *and that is a danger*,” argues Dr [Charlotte Blease](#) of UCD’s school of philosophy. “We aim to change the thinking around entrepreneurship ... to view it as a culture, a philosophy, a permanent theme in education rather than a stand alone subject,” Ibec argues. “We may not all be entrepreneurs, but we can all be entrepreneurial thinkers.”

The urgency underpinning the cases for both subjects is an indictment of our learning system; a massive sponge absorbing facts and then wringing them out in exams. Its failure to develop critical minds and critical thinking is undermining our ability as a society to adapt to a fast-changing workplace and world. As is the system’s inability to integrate new teaching methods; new ways of engaging with subjects and new ways of incorporating experience into the curriculum. We need to give critical thinking a chance – on both fronts.

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