



## Transforming English Language Classrooms: Empowering Future-Ready Learners through Critical Thinking and Creativity in Oman

Badriya Abdullah Ambu-Saidi<sup>1</sup>, Faiza Said Al Tobi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Ministry of Education, Oman

### ABSTRACT

Published Online: October 31, 2025

In a rapidly evolving world driven by technological advancement and knowledge creation, the ability to think critically and act creatively is no longer optional, it is essential. This article explores how fostering critical thinking and creativity can transform English language classrooms into spaces of inquiry, innovation and learner agency. It examines the concept of future-ready learners, outlines powerful classroom strategies for developing critical and creative capacities and highlights how the 'Team Together Oman' curriculum embeds these competencies systematically. The paper positions teachers as catalysts for pedagogical change and aligns these practices with international frameworks and Oman Vision 2040, emphasizing the strategic role of English language education in shaping globally competent, future-ready learners.

### KEYWORDS:

future-ready learners, critical thinking, creativity, English curriculum, Oman Vision 2040, 21st-century pedagogy, language education reform

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is defined by complexity, uncertainty, and accelerated change. Emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, and global interdependence have shifted the expectations of what it means to be an educated person. Learners today must not only acquire knowledge but also apply, adapt, and create it in unpredictable contexts (Saavedra & Opfer, 2022). As OECD (2024) notes, education must prepare students "to solve problems that do not yet exist using tools that have not yet been invented."

Critical thinking and creativity are now widely recognized as foundational competencies for success in academic, professional, and civic life. Critical thinking enables learners to analyze, evaluate, and make reasoned judgments. Creativity fuels innovation, adaptability, and the capacity to imagine alternative futures (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2022; Robinson, 2011). Together, they cultivate agile, reflective, and self-directed learners capable of navigating complexity.

In Oman, educational reform is closely tied to Oman Vision 2040, which prioritizes human capital development and innovation (MOE, 2023). The Ministry of Education in Oman

has undertaken significant curriculum reforms, notably introducing Team Together Oman, an English curriculum that integrates 21st-century competencies through communicative, inquiry-based, and project-based approaches. This aligns with international frameworks emphasizing future-ready learners, those who can think flexibly, collaborate effectively, and learn continuously (Fullan & Scott, 2022).

This article examines the concept of future-ready learners, articulates the importance of critical thinking and creativity, introduces powerful pedagogical strategies to foster these skills, and analyzes how the new English curriculum in Oman operationalizes these competencies. It concludes by highlighting the teacher's central role in transforming classrooms into spaces of innovation and agency.

### 2. FUTURE-READY LEARNERS: CONCEPT AND RELEVANCE

Future-ready learners possess the skills, mindset, and adaptability to thrive in rapidly changing environments. This involves not only acquiring knowledge but also learning how to learn, unlearn, and relearn (Dede, 2019). International frameworks such as the OECD Learning Compass 2030 identify critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy as core competencies for global citizenship and employability (OECD, 2024; Voogt & Roblin, 2019).

*Corresponding Author: Badriya Abdullah Ambu-Saidi*

*\*Cite this Article: Badriya Abdullah Ambu-Saidi, Faiza Said Al Tobi (2025). Transforming English Language Classrooms: Empowering Future-Ready Learners through Critical Thinking and Creativity in Oman. International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies, 5(10), 981-984*

## **Badriya Abdullah Ambu-Saidi et al, Transforming English Language Classrooms: Empowering Future-Ready Learners through Critical Thinking and Creativity in Oman**

Key attributes of future-ready learners include:

- **Critical Thinking:** Interpreting, evaluating, and synthesizing complex information.
- **Creativity:** Generating and refining innovative ideas.
- **Collaboration:** Working productively across diverse groups.
- **Digital Fluency:** Leveraging technology critically and ethically.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Embracing curiosity and self-directed growth (Dede, 2019).

This profile aligns with Oman's national education vision, which seeks to produce learners who contribute to national development while engaging globally.

### **3. THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL THINKING AND CREATIVITY**

Critical thinking enables learners to evaluate claims, challenge bias, and engage in reasoned argumentation. In language classrooms, it enhances reading comprehension, interpretation, inference, and reflective writing (Paul & Elder, 2019). Beyond academics, it develops informed, responsible citizens capable of making thoughtful decisions.

Creativity supports divergent thinking, flexible problem solving, and innovative expression. It encourages learners to explore multiple perspectives, experiment with language, and generate original ideas. In rapidly changing economies, creativity is among the most in-demand skills (World Economic Forum, 2023).

When critical thinking and creativity intersect, learners become innovators rather than consumers of knowledge. They can evaluate ideas rigorously while imagining new possibilities, a combination essential for future work and societal participation (Schleicher, 2018).

### **4. PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES TO FOSTER CRITICAL THINKING AND CREATIVITY**

To foster higher-order skills, teachers must move beyond traditional instruction toward inquiry-driven, learner-centered pedagogy (Hattie, 2023; Lucas et al., 2013).

Strategies to foster critical thinking include:

- **Socratic Circles:** Structured dialogue, citing evidence, and probing questions.
- **Visible Thinking Routines** (e.g., See–Think–Wonder).
- **Inquiry-Based Learning** with open-ended investigations.
- **Critical Digital Literacy Tasks:** Analyzing online texts and bias.
- **AI-Assisted Critique:** Evaluating AI-generated responses for accuracy.

Strategies to foster creativity include:

- **Design Thinking Projects:** Problem identification, ideation, and prototyping.

- **Multimodal Storytelling:** Podcasts, short films, and digital comics.
- **Creative Constraints** (e.g., 100-word story challenges).
- **Gamified Language Challenges** (escape rooms, storytelling dice).
- **Translanguaging and Cultural Expression** (Paul & Elder, 2019).

These strategies must be embedded in classroom culture, valuing risk-taking, encouraging curiosity, and treating mistakes as opportunities for growth.

### **5. THE ROLE OF THE NEW ENGLISH CURRICULUM (TEAM TOGETHER OMAN)**

Team Together Oman curriculum represents a pedagogical shift from knowledge transmission to future-oriented skill development, embedding 21st-century competencies systematically across units. Its structure is intentionally designed to develop learners' linguistic, cognitive, and creative capacities while fostering autonomy, inquiry, and collaboration (MOE, 2023).

- **“Team Talk” and “Let’s Think”:** These sections promote dialogic exploration and Socratic questioning through open-ended prompts and structured debates, encouraging learners to articulate opinions, justify reasoning, and engage critically with ideas.
- **Creativity through Storytelling, Projects, and CLIL:** The Discovery Team stories at the heart of each unit encourage learners to engage imaginatively with language through narrative exploration and problem-solving. Additionally, the Project sections and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) tasks give learners opportunities to: Design creative outputs (e.g., TV adverts, posters, presentations), explore science and social studies themes through English as well as collaborating with peers to produce original content (MOE, 2023).
- **Project-Based Learning Tasks:** Each unit integrates inquiry and collaborative projects that stimulate problem solving and creative design, mirroring real-world communication contexts.
- **Critical Reading Tasks:** Texts are accompanied by prediction, inferencing, and evaluative questioning activities that encourage interpretation and critical engagement beyond literal comprehension.
- **Writing Workshops:** The curriculum emphasizes a process-oriented approach to writing, guiding students through brainstorming, drafting, peer feedback, and revision while engaging with multiple creative genres.

Beyond its task design, the curriculum aligns with the OECD Creativity and Critical Thinking Framework and the strategic goals of Oman Vision 2040, ensuring that English language

## Badriya Abdullah Ambu-Saidi et al, Transforming English Language Classrooms: Empowering Future-Ready Learners through Critical Thinking and Creativity in Oman

learning cultivates competent, reflective, and innovative citizens (OECD, 2024). By embedding critical thinking and creativity into each unit, the curriculum moves English language education in Oman toward a more integrated, future-ready model.

This curriculum, however, can only reach its full potential through skillful and reflective implementation by teachers who act as the key catalysts in transforming classroom experiences into meaningful opportunities for deep learning (Dede, 2019).

### 6. TEACHERS AS CATALYSTS FOR TRANSFORMATION

While the curriculum provides the framework for embedding critical thinking and creativity, it is teachers who bring these principles to life in the classroom. They play a pivotal role in shaping how students experience learning, moving from curriculum intention to classroom reality (MOE, 2023). In this sense, teachers are not simply implementers of lessons but designers of learning experiences, facilitators of inquiry, and architects of thinking cultures.

- **Learning Designers:** Teachers design rich, cognitively engaging learning experiences that foster inquiry, collaboration, and creativity. They select and adapt tasks to meet learners' needs while maintaining a clear focus on developing higher-order thinking skills (Saavedra & Opfer, 2022).
- **Facilitators of Inquiry:** Rather than transmitting knowledge, effective teachers encourage questioning, exploration, and dialogue. They create opportunities for learners to construct meaning, make connections, and solve problems collaboratively (Hattie, 2023).
- **Models of Thinking:** By making their own thought processes visible through think-aloud strategies, reflective questioning, and reasoning aloud, teachers model critical and creative thinking in authentic ways.
- **Cultivators of Safe Learning Environments:** A psychologically safe classroom climate allows students to take intellectual risks, share divergent ideas, and view mistakes as valuable learning opportunities (Hattie, 2023).
- **Professional Learners:** To sustain innovation, teachers engage in continuous professional growth, exploring new pedagogies, integrating technology, collaborating with peers, and reflecting on their practice.

Ultimately, teachers are the bridge between policy and practice. Their pedagogical expertise, reflective capacity, and professional agency determine how effectively critical thinking and creativity are developed in students (Paul & Elder, 2019). When empowered, supported, and well-prepared, teachers can transform the potential of the

curriculum into powerful, future-oriented classroom practices that shape active, thoughtful, and innovative learners (Schleicher, 2018).

Such reflective practices ensure skills are not episodic, but integral to learning.

### 8. CONCLUSION

Developing future-ready learners is both a national imperative and a pedagogical necessity. Critical thinking and creativity are the engines that drive innovation, adaptability, and meaningful participation in society. Team Together Oman curriculum provides a structured foundation to embed these skills in English language education. Yet, their full potential will only be realized when teachers embrace transformative practices that foster inquiry, autonomy, and imagination.

By aligning curriculum, pedagogy, and national vision, Oman can cultivate generations of learners who are not just prepared for the future, but capable of shaping it.

### REFERENCES

1. Beghetto, R. A., & Kaufman, J. C. (2022). Nurturing creativity in the classroom:
2. Practical strategies for teachers. Cambridge University Press.
3. Costa, A. L., & Kallick, B. (2008). Learning and leading with habits of mind. ASCD.
4. Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2019).
5. Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140.
6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
7. Dede, C. (2019). Empowering future-ready learners through technology and innovation. Harvard University Press.
8. Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2022). *Leading deep change in schools: A new paradigm for 21st-century learning*. Corwin Press.
9. Fullan, M., & Scott, G. (2022). New pedagogies for deep learning: Scaling impact. Corwin Press.
10. Hattie, J. (2023). Visible learning: The sequel. Routledge.
11. Lucas, B., & Spencer, E. (2020). *Teaching creative thinking: Developing learners who generate ideas and can think critically*. OECD Publishing.
12. Lucas, B., Claxton, G., & Spencer, E. (2013). Progression in creativity: Developing new forms of assessment. OECD Publishing.
13. Ministry of Education. (2023). English Language Curriculum Framework: Team Together Oman. Muscat: Sultanate of Oman.

**Badriya Abdullah Ambu-Saidi et al, Transforming English Language Classrooms: Empowering Future-Ready Learners through Critical Thinking and Creativity in Oman**

14. OECD. (2024). Creativity in education summit 2024. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
15. Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2019). The miniature guide to critical thinking concepts and tools. Foundation for Critical Thinking.
16. Robinson, K. (2011). Out of our minds: Learning to be creative. Capstone.
17. Saavedra, A. R., & Opfer, V. D. (2022). Teaching and learning 21st century skills:
18. Lessons from the learning sciences. RAND Corporation.
19. Schleicher, A. (2018). *World class: How to build a 21st-century school system*. OECD Publishing.
20. Voogt, J., & Roblin, N. P. (2019). A comparative analysis of international frameworks for 21st century competences. Education Research International, 2019, Article 7147048. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2019/7147048>
21. World Economic Forum. (2023). The future of jobs report 2023. World Economic Forum.