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THE ROLE OF NON-STANDARD TASKS IN DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: This scientific article explores the development of critical thinking in primary school students. It provides an overview of key concepts, emphasizes the importance of integrating critical thinking into educational programs, and investigates how teachers perceive and implement critical thinking practices. The paper highlights the significance of non-standard tasks in fostering creativity and logical reasoning among young learners.
Keywords: Critical thinking, psychologists and philosophers, Brussels, "non-critical thinking," creativity, educational tasks.

Introduction. Critical thinking is widely recognized as essential for shaping students' cognitive abilities and strengthening educational systems. For children, critical thinking involves reasoning based on facts, accepting open-minded and inquisitive thinking, and making informed judgments. This skill allows them to evaluate different perspectives and make logical conclusions independently.

Solving non-standard tasks is directly linked to creativity and plays a key role in developing students' logical reasoning. Particularly in subjects like mathematics, the ability to solve problems forms the backbone of learning, requiring well-structured and intensive work.

As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated:

"Critical analysis, strict discipline, and personal responsibility should become the daily rule of every leader's activity."

If we begin instilling critical analysis skills in students from a young age, they are more likely to grow into competent and capable professionals who will contribute significantly to the country's future.

Importance of Integrating Critical Thinking in Education

To effectively develop students' critical thinking, educational curricula must be redesigned to include more practical, activity-based learning. Although educators, psychologists, and philosophers generally agree on the importance of critical thinking, there is still no consensus on how to define and implement it in practice. The main objective of this research is to study how primary school teachers understand the concept of critical thinking and how they incorporate it into their professional teaching environment.

According to teachers, the following are key traits of critical thinkers: the ability to address various cultural issues, work collaboratively, and express analytical and open-minded thought. Classroom practices such as creating mind maps, facilitating group discussions, and promoting active learning help nurture critical thinking.

However, many teachers acknowledge that their practical experience with critical thinking strategies remains limited. During teacher training, some educators are introduced to project-based learning and the use of philosophy for children (P4C) as a method to promote critical

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thinking. They also stress the need for peer learning and sharing best practices to improve teacher training.

Critical thinking thrives in environments where the diversity of ideas is respected and encouraged. It cannot occur in a rigid mindset that accepts only one "correct" answer. Critical thinking is not a skill that can be taught once and forgotten; it requires continuous reinforcement in suitable learning environments.

Conditions for Developing Critical Thinking

To support the development of critical thinking in students, the following conditions should be met:

- Provide time and opportunity to practice critical thinking.
- Create spaces where students can express their thoughts freely.
- Encourage acceptance of diverse ideas and viewpoints.
- Promote student engagement in learning activities.
- Assure students that their opinions will not be mocked or ridiculed.
- Foster self-confidence and belief in their ability to think critically.
- Value the emergence of independent thought.

As a result, students are more likely to:

- Gain confidence and value their own ideas.
- Actively participate in classroom activities.
- Listen attentively to different viewpoints.
- Form their own judgments.

Misconceptions About Critical Thinking

Before exploring what constitutes critical thinking, it is important to understand what it is *not*. One common misconception is equating memory with critical thinking. While memory is a necessary cognitive skill, it alone does not indicate critical thinking. Computers, for instance, have superior memory capabilities but lack the reasoning skills associated with critical thought.

Many educators still place greater emphasis on rote memorization, especially when it comes to exams and assessments. In contrast, critical thinking involves deeper cognitive processes such as evaluation, reasoning, and innovation.

Another related process often mistaken for critical thinking is comprehension. For example, a student trying to understand a complex theorem is engaged in challenging mental work. However, this alone is not critical thinking. True critical thinking begins when the student analyzes, evaluates, expands upon, and applies newly understood ideas.

Thus, while remembering facts and understanding concepts are prerequisites for critical thinking, they do not automatically result in it.

The Role of Non-standard Tasks

In today's educational context, teaching students how to think critically is considered a vital objective. When students encounter new information, they should be able to evaluate it independently, consider it from multiple angles, and decide how it fits with their own goals.

Non-standard tasks play a critical role in this regard. They:

- Encourage creative thinking.
- Involve analyzing and solving complex problems.

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- Provide opportunities to reflect through meaningful stories.
- Allow for both written and oral assessments.
- Offer alternative formats like discussion-based evaluation.

Such tasks help foster creative and analytical thinking in primary school students, making them more engaged and capable learners.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the following strategies are effective for fostering creative and critical thinking in primary school students:

- Creative writing and analytical exercises.
- Problem-based learning scenarios.
- Reflective story analysis.
- Evaluating test results through discussion and open-ended questioning.

The use of non-standard tasks is extremely important in primary education, as they promote the development of higher-order thinking skills and prepare students for lifelong learning.

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