



PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AT THE PRIMARY EDUCATION LEVEL

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Abstract: This article discusses the pedagogical, psychological, and methodological foundations for developing critical thinking skills in primary school students. The essence of critical thinking, the necessity of fostering it from an early age, strategies applied in the learning process, instructional methods, and the role of the teacher are analyzed. The significance of critical thinking in shaping students into independent thinkers within a modern educational environment is highlighted.

Keywords: primary education, critical thinking, independent thought, interactive methods, learning activity, creative approach

In today's era of globalization, it is not enough for individuals to be merely knowledgeable—they must be capable of independent, analytical thinking and drawing conclusions based on evidence education. This is because, during this stage, students' cognitive development is in its formative phase, and the foundation laid here serves as a solid base for later stages.

Critical thinking is the ability not to accept information at face value but to analyze, evaluate, and draw logical conclusions from it. It fosters independence in reasoning, creativity in problem-solving, and conscious engagement with various situations. Developing these skills in primary school students means fostering not only knowledge acquisition but also cultivating conscious learning, questioning, expressing opinions, and analytical thinking.

The primary age range (7–10 years) is a key developmental period in which children's logical thinking, comprehension, and expressive abilities begin to take shape. At this stage, children are naturally curious, ask questions, and seek explanations. Teachers must leverage these characteristics by applying thinking-provoking questions, assignments, discussions, and analytical methods during lessons.

Effective methods for developing critical thinking include:





• **“Idea Tree” Method:** Students express their thoughts both orally and in writing while learning to identify cause-and-effect relationships.

• **“Mind Map”:** Students visually map key concepts related to a topic and develop analytical connections.

• **“Question-Answer Circle”:** Students practice analytical thinking by answering “why?”, “how?”, and “what for?” questions about each topic.

• **Role-Playing and Dramatization:** By acting out different roles, students examine events from multiple perspectives.

• **Problem-Based Tasks:** Presenting open-ended problems encourages independent thought and the search for creative solutions.

In this process, the teacher serves as a guide, questioner, observer, and motivator. It is essential that the teacher values every student response, encourages new questions, and supports students regardless of whether their answers are right or wrong. Each student’s voice must be heard, as this builds confidence and promotes the habit of expressing ideas.

The family also plays a significant role in the development of critical thinking. Parents can reinforce these skills by asking thoughtful questions, listening to their children's views, and involving them in decision-making processes. A strong partnership between school and family positively influences a child’s intellectual growth.

Fostering critical thinking at the primary level is one of the key objectives of modern education. This process shapes not only academic success but also the worldview, attitude toward challenges, and conscious life approach of students. The formation of such skills prepares students to become future individuals who can independently analyze, explore, and express informed opinions.

Therefore, creating a learning environment in primary classrooms that is built on innovative methodologies, forward-thinking approaches, and strong collaboration between teachers and parents is essential for the successful development of critical thinking skills.

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