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THE ROLE OF CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN EDUCATION

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This article systematically examines the role and significance of critical thinking skills in modern education, its main components, developmental stages, and essential competencies. The article analyzes the pedagogical foundations of fostering critical thinking through innovative teaching methods, digital technologies, and information and communication tools in the educational process. Special attention is paid to the formation of analytical, reflective, and problem-solving competencies in learners, which are considered key factors in improving the quality and effectiveness of education.

Today, as education systems worldwide adapt to rapid technological advancement and societal change, the development of critical thinking skills has become one of the most important priorities of modern education. Education is no longer limited to the transmission of factual knowledge; instead, it aims to develop learners' ability to analyze information, evaluate evidence, and make reasoned decisions. Critical thinking plays a crucial role in preparing learners for complex real-life situations and lifelong learning.

Critical thinking in education involves the development of logical reasoning, analytical skills, creativity, and independent judgment. Therefore, the educational process should incorporate modern pedagogical approaches, interactive methods,

and digital technologies that encourage active learning and intellectual engagement. The integration of critical thinking skills enables students to become active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of information.

The model for developing critical thinking skills in education represents a pedagogical system that reflects the interconnection between educational goals, content, teaching methods, learning tools, and outcomes. This model is aimed at forming learners' cognitive, analytical, and reflective competencies necessary for academic success and social participation.

The main goal of the model is to develop learners who can think independently, analyze problems critically, use information responsibly, and apply knowledge creatively in different contexts.

Main components of the model

1. **The target component** is the guiding element of the critical thinking development model in education, determining the overall direction, content, and expected outcomes of the learning process. The main objective of this component is to form learners who possess critical awareness, logical reasoning, and the ability to evaluate information objectively in academic and everyday situations.

2. **The content component** reflects the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary for developing critical thinking skills. This component includes educational materials that promote analysis, comparison, synthesis, and evaluation. The content is designed to encourage questioning, discussion, and deep understanding rather than rote memorization.

3. **The technological component** focuses on the effective use of modern educational technologies, digital platforms, and interactive tools in fostering critical thinking. Its main goal is to create a learning environment that supports inquiry-based learning, problem-based tasks, and collaborative activities through ICT tools.

4. **The motivational and communicative component** plays an essential role in developing learners' interest in thinking critically. It includes fostering motivation for learning, encouraging open communication, discussion, and cooperation. This component emphasizes learner-centered and socio-psychological aspects of education.

5. **The outcome component** represents the final stage of the model and focuses on assessing the level of critical thinking skills developed by learners. It evaluates students' ability to analyze information, solve problems, reflect on learning experiences, and apply critical thinking in different educational contexts.

Stages of development

The development of critical thinking skills in education is carried out through the following stages:

1. **Formation of basic cognitive knowledge** is the initial stage, where learners acquire foundational knowledge and basic thinking skills. At this stage, students learn to understand concepts, identify key ideas, and recognize relationships between information.

2. **Development of analytical skills** focuses on teaching learners how to compare, classify, and analyze information. This stage enhances learners' ability to identify problems, examine evidence, and draw logical conclusions.

3. **Practical application stage** is aimed at applying critical thinking skills in real-life and academic situations. This stage includes problem-solving tasks, case studies, project-based learning, and group discussions.

4. **Development of innovative and reflective competencies** ensures that learners can

evaluate their own thinking processes, reflect on outcomes, and adopt innovative approaches. This stage supports adaptability and creative problem solving.

5. **The final stage** focuses on assessing learners' readiness to use critical thinking skills independently in educational, professional, and social contexts.

Core competencies

The main competencies developed through critical thinking education include:

- Analytical and logical thinking competence;
- Problem-solving and decision-making competence;
- Information evaluation and media literacy competence;
- Innovative and creative thinking competence;
- Communicative and collaborative competence.

These competencies contribute to effective learning, responsible information use, and the development of independent and reflective individuals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the development of critical thinking skills in education is based on the integration of modern pedagogical technologies, innovative teaching methods, and digital tools. This approach significantly enhances the quality of education and prepares learners for the challenges of the contemporary world. As a result, students gain greater opportunities to develop analytical thinking, intellectual independence, and creativity, which are essential for lifelong learning and social development.

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