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THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN A MODERN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

This article highlights the theoretical and practical significance of developing critical thinking skills among primary school students in a digital educational environment. It analyzes the issues of fostering students' independent thinking, information analysis, comparison, conclusion-making, and rational approaches to problem-solving through educational processes organized on the basis of digital technologies. Furthermore, the article emphasizes interactive teaching methods, digital platforms, multimedia tools, and teachers' pedagogical competence as key factors in developing critical thinking in primary education. Along with the advantages of the digital learning environment, the necessary pedagogical conditions for its effective implementation are also discussed.

Keywords: Digital educational environment, critical thinking, primary education, interactive methods, information analysis, independent thinking, digital technologies, pedagogical approach, media literacy, educational effectiveness.



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In today's era of globalization and informatization, new challenges are being posed to the education system. Modern society requires individuals who can not only memorize ready-made knowledge but also think independently, filter and analyze information, and draw reasoned conclusions. Therefore, developing critical thinking skills has become one of the priority directions of education. This is especially important in primary education, as it is during this stage that children's cognitive activity, thinking abilities, observation skills, and capacity for independent conclusion-making begin to develop [2, p. 18]. The digital educational environment is fundamentally transforming the content, forms, and methods of education. Electronic textbooks, interactive whiteboards, educational platforms, video materials, animations, online tests, and mobile applications are increasingly integrated into the learning process. These tools not only expand students' opportunities for acquiring knowledge but also stimulate their thinking activities. In a digital environment, a child becomes not merely a recipient of information but also an active seeker, analyzer, and processor of information [5, p. 27].

Critical thinking is not simply accepting information as it is; rather, it is the ability to analyze information carefully, compare evidence, identify cause-and-effect relationships, evaluate problems from different perspectives, and make informed decisions. Developing critical thinking skills among primary school students helps them acquire cognitive operations such as questioning, observation, comparison, differentiation, generalization, and conclusion-making [3, p. 44]. Children of primary school age are characterized by curiosity, a desire for novelty, and sensitivity to new experiences. If the educational process is organized in a modern, engaging, and interactive manner, students at this age can actively participate even in complex intellectual activities. The digital educational environment creates precisely such opportunities. Colorful visuals, multimedia



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resources, audio and video materials, interactive tasks, and game elements increase students' engagement, enhance their interest in learning, and accelerate their thinking processes [1, p. 35].

The importance of developing critical thinking in a digital educational environment is primarily associated with fostering an information culture. Today, children receive vast amounts of information from various sources. However, not all of this information is reliable, useful, or age-appropriate. Therefore, it is essential to teach students from an early age how to distinguish information, assess its accuracy, identify key ideas, and differentiate between important and secondary information [6, p. 12].

Critical thinking skills also provide a foundation for lifelong independent learning. In a digital environment, students search for, find, compare, and select information from various sources while completing tasks. This process naturally develops their ability to think independently and make decisions. For example, when students are provided with videos, images, and textual materials on a particular topic, they compare them, identify similarities and differences, and then arrive at a general conclusion. Such activities are far more effective than rote memorization because they actively contribute to intellectual development [4, p. 53].

Questioning techniques play a significant role in developing critical thinking among primary school students. In lessons organized through digital tools, teachers may ask questions such as: "Why?", "How?", "What would happen if it were different?", and "Which option is more correct and why?". Such questions encourage students to engage in deeper reflection rather than merely providing simple answers. Consequently, students learn to justify their opinions, defend their viewpoints, and consider problems from multiple perspectives [7, p. 64].



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The main pedagogical conditions for developing critical thinking through a digital educational environment in primary education include the following:

1. Organizing lessons based on interactive and problem-based learning situations;
2. Selecting digital materials that are age-appropriate and purpose-oriented;
3. Providing tasks that encourage analysis, comparison, evaluation, and conclusion-making;
4. Enhancing teachers' digital pedagogical competencies;
5. Strengthening cooperation between families and schools [4, p. 74].

In conclusion, developing critical thinking skills among primary school students in a digital educational environment is one of the most pressing tasks of contemporary education. A modern student should not only possess knowledge but also be able to analyze it independently, distinguish reliable information, solve problems, and make informed decisions. The digital educational environment offers extensive opportunities in this regard. Through well-organized digital lessons, interactive methods, media literacy education, problem-based tasks, and effective teacher guidance, critical thinking skills can be successfully developed among primary school students. Therefore, the rational use of digital educational environments not only improves the quality of education but also contributes to nurturing conscious, independent, and creative thinkers who will thrive in the future.

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