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The Role of Critical Thinking in Primary School Students

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Abstract. The article examines the role of critical thinking in the educational process of primary school and its importance for the comprehensive development of a junior school student's personality. In the context of the rapid growth of information, the formation of children's ability to consciously perceive educational material, analyze facts, compare different viewpoints, and draw well-grounded conclusions becomes especially relevant. Primary school represents a fundamental stage at which the foundations of cognitive independence and learning skills are established.

The paper reveals the concept of critical thinking taking into account the age characteristics of primary school pupils and emphasizes its influence on the development of logical thinking, speech, attention, and learning motivation. It is noted that the development of critical thinking contributes to improving the quality of knowledge acquisition, fostering interest in learning, and developing the ability to apply acquired knowledge in practical situations.

Special attention is paid to the role of the teacher in the process of developing critical thinking, as well as to pedagogical methods and techniques that promote its formation, such as problem-based learning, dialogue, work with texts, and game-based and research activities. It is emphasized that purposeful and systematic work on the development of critical thinking in primary school creates a solid foundation for successful learning at subsequent levels of education and contributes to the formation of an active, independent, and responsible personality.

Keywords: critical thinking, primary school, junior schoolchildren, cognitive activity, thinking development, learner independence, educational process, teacher's role.

In the conditions of modern society, rich in information, the development of critical thinking at the early stages of learning is of particular importance. Primary school is the most important period for the formation of cognitive skills, value orientations, and independent thinking skills. It is at this age that the foundations of the ability to analyze information, draw conclusions, and make conscious decisions are laid.

Critical thinking is a person's ability to meaningfully perceive information, analyze it, compare different points of view, ask questions, and formulate well-founded conclusions. For primary school students, critical thinking is manifested in the ability to reason, explain their answers, find cause-and-effect relationships, and not accept information without thinking.

Critical thinking represents a complex intellectual process aimed at meaningful perception, analysis, and evaluation of information for the purpose of forming





reasoned judgments and making balanced decisions. It presupposes an active position of the individual in relation to the acquired knowledge and the ability not only to assimilate information, but also to analyze, interpret, and verify it.

In the pedagogical context, critical thinking is considered as the student's ability to understand the content of educational material, identify cause-and-effect relationships, compare different points of view, argue their own opinion, and draw independent conclusions. Unlike reproductive thinking, which is oriented towards simple reproduction of knowledge, critical thinking is aimed at its deep understanding and meaningful application.

For primary school students, critical thinking is manifested in the ability to ask questions, explain the course of their reasoning, find mistakes, analyze the actions of heroes, predict results, and evaluate the received information based on personal experience. It is closely related to the development of logical thinking, speech, attention, and cognitive activity.

Critical thinking includes a number of components: analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, evaluation, and reflection. Its important characteristic is the ability to doubt, verify the reliability of information, and recognize the basis of one's own judgments. Thus, critical thinking forms a culture of mental work in students and contributes to the development of an independent, responsible, and active personality.

The importance of critical thinking in primary school

The development of critical thinking in primary school is one of the key tasks of modern education, since it is during this period that the foundations of a child's intellectual, personal, and social development are laid. Primary grades represent an important stage in the formation of cognitive processes, when students develop an attitude towards learning, independent work skills, and the foundations of learning.

Critical thinking contributes to the active involvement of younger schoolchildren in the learning process. Students cease to be passive consumers of information and become active participants in cognitive activity. They learn to ask questions, reflect on the content of the educational material, analyze the information received, and express their own opinion. This increases the level of awareness of learning and contributes to a stronger assimilation of knowledge.

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In the context of the information society, the importance of critical thinking is growing even more.

Even in primary school, children encounter a large amount of information, therefore the ability to select reliable information, distinguish facts from opinions, and meaningfully perceive educational material becomes necessary. Critical thinking contributes to the formation of information literacy and a stable cognitive interest. The formation of critical thinking in primary school is carried out through various pedagogical methods and techniques. Among the most effective are:

- posing problematic issues and situations;
- organization of dialogues and discussions;
- working with texts (analysis, forecasting, formulating questions);
- use of game and research tasks;
- encouragement of reasoned answers and different points of view.

Of particular importance is the role of the teacher, who acts not only as a source of knowledge, but also as an organizer of cognitive activity, creating conditions for the active thinking of students.

The role of critical thinking in further learning. The critical thinking skills formed in primary school become the foundation for successful learning in subsequent stages of education. They help students better master the educational material, effectively solve educational tasks, and navigate the information space. Moreover, critical thinking contributes to the formation of a personality capable of self-development and conscious choice.

Thus, the development of critical thinking in primary school students is one of the priority tasks of modern education. Systematic and purposeful work in this direction allows us to form in children the ability to think independently, analyze information, and apply knowledge in practice, which is an important condition for their successful learning and personal development.

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