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**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUPPORT OF MODERN SCIENCE AND INNOVATION:** a collection scientific works of the International scientific conference – Madrid, Spain, 2026, Issue 5.

**Languages of publication:** Uzbek, English, Russian, German, Italian, Spanish,

The collection consists of scientific research of scientists, graduate students and students who took part in the International Scientific online conference «**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUPPORT OF MODERN SCIENCE AND INNOVATION**». Which took place in Spain, 2026.

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## THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT THINKING IN STUDENTS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract.** This article examines the role of independent thinking in students' personal development within the modern educational environment. Independent thinking is considered one of the essential competencies that enables students to analyze information critically, make rational decisions, and solve problems creatively. The study highlights the pedagogical and psychological factors that influence the formation of independent thinking skills among university students. Modern teaching approaches, including interactive methods, problem-based learning, and digital educational technologies, are analyzed as effective tools for developing students' intellectual autonomy. The article also discusses the relationship between independent thinking and personal growth, emphasizing self-confidence, responsibility, creativity, and self-assessment abilities. Research findings indicate that students who actively engage in independent learning activities demonstrate higher academic achievement and stronger social adaptability. The paper concludes that fostering independent thinking should become one of the primary objectives of higher education institutions in preparing competitive and innovative specialists for contemporary society.

**Key words:** independent thinking, personal development, students, pedagogy, psychology, critical thinking, higher education, creativity, self-development, educational technologies.

**Introduction.** In the modern educational system, the development of students' independent thinking has become one of the most significant pedagogical and psychological issues. Rapid globalization, technological advancement, and the increasing flow of information require students not only to acquire knowledge but also to analyze, evaluate, and apply it independently. Therefore, higher education institutions are expected to create conditions that support students' intellectual and personal growth.

Independent thinking is the ability of an individual to express personal opinions, evaluate situations critically, and make decisions without excessive external influence. It plays a crucial role in students' academic success, professional competence, and social adaptation. Students with strong independent thinking skills are generally more active, creative, and motivated in the learning process.

Personal development is closely connected with self-awareness, emotional stability, responsibility, and creativity. Independent thinking contributes to these qualities by encouraging students to participate actively in educational and social activities. Consequently, studying the role of independent thinking in personal development is highly relevant in modern pedagogical and psychological research.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the pedagogical and psychological importance of independent thinking in students' personal development and to identify effective educational approaches for its improvement. [1.50]

**Literature review and methodology.** Many researchers have investigated the relationship between independent thinking and students' personal development. According to educational psychologists, independent thinking develops through active participation in learning activities, reflective practices, and collaborative communication. Modern pedagogical theories emphasize student-centered learning as an effective approach for developing autonomy and critical thinking skills.

Researchers such as John Dewey highlighted the importance of reflective thinking in education. Dewey believed that students should actively participate in problem-solving activities to become independent learners. Similarly, Lev Vygotsky emphasized the social nature of learning and argued that communication and interaction significantly influence cognitive development. [2.37]

Recent studies demonstrate that innovative teaching methods positively affect students' intellectual independence. Problem-based learning, project-based learning, brainstorming, debates, and case-study methods encourage students to think analytically and creatively. Digital educational technologies also provide opportunities for self-directed learning and information analysis.

The methodology of this article is based on theoretical analysis and comparative study of pedagogical and psychological literature related to independent thinking and personal development. Scientific articles, educational resources, and psychological research papers were analyzed to identify major factors influencing students' independent thinking abilities. The study also examines practical educational methods used in higher education institutions to support students' cognitive and personal growth. [3.109]

**Discussion and results.** The analysis reveals that independent thinking significantly contributes to students' personal development in several ways. First, it enhances self-confidence and responsibility. Students who are encouraged to express their opinions freely become more confident in academic and social situations. They learn to defend their viewpoints logically and respectfully.

Second, independent thinking improves critical and analytical skills. Students develop the ability to compare information, identify reliable sources, and make evidence-based conclusions. These skills are particularly important in the digital age, where misinformation and excessive data are widespread. [4.180]

Third, independent thinking supports creativity and innovation. Creative students are more capable of generating new ideas and finding unconventional solutions to problems. Educational methods such as project work, group discussions, and problem-solving tasks stimulate intellectual curiosity and innovation. [5.225]

Another important result is the relationship between independent thinking and motivation. Students who actively participate in the learning process usually



demonstrate higher intrinsic motivation and academic performance. They become more interested in self-education and lifelong learning. [6.76]

Psychological factors also play an essential role in developing independent thinking. A positive learning environment, emotional support from teachers, and constructive feedback help students overcome fear of making mistakes. When students feel psychologically secure, they are more willing to express original ideas and participate in discussions.

The study also indicates that traditional teacher-centered approaches may limit students' intellectual independence. Excessive memorization and passive learning reduce creativity and critical analysis. Therefore, modern education should focus on interactive and student-oriented methodologies. [7.40]

Overall, the results confirm that independent thinking is a fundamental component of students' personal and professional development. It not only improves academic achievements but also prepares students for future social and professional challenges. [8.58]

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, independent thinking plays a vital role in students' personal development and academic success. It contributes to the formation of self-confidence, responsibility, creativity, and critical thinking abilities. Modern educational systems should prioritize the development of independent thinking through innovative pedagogical methods and supportive psychological environments.

Higher education institutions must create learning conditions that encourage active participation, problem-solving, and self-directed learning. Teachers should act not only as information providers but also as facilitators who guide students toward intellectual autonomy and personal growth.

The findings of this study demonstrate that independent thinking is essential for preparing competent, adaptable, and innovative specialists in contemporary society. Therefore, integrating pedagogical and psychological strategies aimed at developing independent thinking should remain one of the key priorities of modern education.



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