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ISSUES OF DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT THINKING IN THE PROCESS OF TEAMWORK

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Abstract. This article explores the pedagogical and psychological issues of developing independent thinking during teamwork in higher education. In modern educational systems, teamwork has become an essential method for improving communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills among students. At the same time, the ability to think independently remains a fundamental component of students' intellectual and personal development. The article examines how collaborative learning environments can both support and limit independent thinking. Special attention is given to the role of teachers, interactive teaching methods, and psychological factors in balancing teamwork with individual intellectual activity. The study analyzes modern educational approaches such as project-based learning, group discussions, brainstorming, and cooperative learning strategies. The findings demonstrate that properly organized teamwork encourages students to express personal opinions, defend arguments, and develop creative solutions. However, ineffective group management may lead to passivity and dependence on stronger group members. The article concludes that higher education institutions should apply student-centered methodologies that simultaneously promote collaboration and independent intellectual engagement.

Key words: teamwork, independent thinking, collaborative learning, students, pedagogy, psychology, critical thinking, communication, higher education, creativity.

Introduction. In contemporary education, teamwork has become one of the most widely used instructional approaches for developing students' social and professional competencies. Modern society requires specialists who are able to work collaboratively, communicate effectively, and solve problems collectively. Therefore, educational institutions increasingly integrate group activities into the learning process.

At the same time, independent thinking remains one of the most important intellectual abilities for students. Independent thinkers are capable of analyzing information critically, generating original ideas, and making responsible decisions. The challenge for educators is to create learning environments where teamwork supports rather than suppresses individual thinking. [1.34]

The relationship between teamwork and independent thinking is complex. On one hand, collaborative activities provide opportunities for exchanging ideas, discussing problems, and learning from peers. On the other hand, some students may become passive participants and rely excessively on more active group members. As a result, their independent intellectual activity may decrease.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the pedagogical and psychological issues related to the development of independent thinking during teamwork and to identify effective educational methods for improving both collaboration and intellectual autonomy among students. [2.65]

Literature review and methodology. Numerous scholars have emphasized the importance of collaborative learning in modern education. Lev Vygotsky argued that cognitive development occurs through social interaction and communication. According to his sociocultural theory, students acquire new knowledge and skills through cooperation with others. This perspective supports the idea that teamwork can positively influence intellectual growth. [3.92]

John Dewey also highlighted the importance of active participation and communication in the educational process. He believed that students learn more effectively when they engage in practical problem-solving activities and collaborative discussions. Modern educational theories continue to support these principles through student-centered and interactive methodologies.

Research shows that teamwork contributes to the development of communication skills, leadership qualities, and emotional intelligence. Group projects, debates, brainstorming sessions, and cooperative tasks encourage students to exchange perspectives and analyze information collectively. Such activities often stimulate creativity and critical thinking. [4.156]

However, several researchers have identified challenges associated with teamwork. Unequal participation, social pressure, and group conformity may negatively affect students' independent thinking. Some students hesitate to express unique opinions due to fear of criticism or conflict within the group. Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in organizing teamwork effectively and maintaining a psychologically supportive environment.

The methodology of this article is based on theoretical analysis of pedagogical and psychological literature related to teamwork and independent thinking. Scientific studies, educational resources, and contemporary teaching practices were analyzed to determine the major factors influencing students' intellectual independence during collaborative learning activities.

Discussion and results. The analysis demonstrates that teamwork can significantly contribute to the development of independent thinking when properly organized. One of the main advantages of teamwork is the opportunity for students to exchange ideas and viewpoints. Through discussions and collaborative problem-solving, students learn to compare different perspectives and justify their own opinions logically. [5.227]

Another important benefit is the development of communication skills. During group activities, students learn to express thoughts clearly, listen actively, and participate respectfully in discussions. These communication experiences strengthen self-confidence and intellectual independence.

The study also shows that teamwork enhances creativity and critical thinking. Brainstorming activities and project-based learning encourage students to

generate original ideas and search for innovative solutions. Students become more intellectually active when they are involved in solving real-life or practical problems collaboratively. [6.269]

However, the research identifies several challenges. In some cases, passive students rely heavily on active group members and contribute minimally to the learning process. This situation may reduce opportunities for developing independent analysis and decision-making skills. Group conformity is another issue, as students sometimes avoid expressing alternative viewpoints to maintain social harmony. [7.181]

Psychological factors strongly influence the effectiveness of teamwork. A supportive and respectful learning environment encourages students to share ideas openly without fear of criticism. Teachers should create conditions where every student has an opportunity to participate actively in discussions and decision-making processes.

The findings also indicate that the teacher's role is essential in balancing collaboration and individual responsibility. Teachers should monitor group dynamics, distribute tasks fairly, and encourage reflective thinking. Individual assessment methods combined with group activities can motivate students to remain intellectually engaged throughout the collaborative process. [8.175]

Overall, the results confirm that teamwork can serve as an effective tool for developing independent thinking if educational activities are designed carefully and student participation is managed appropriately.

Conclusion. In conclusion, teamwork plays a significant role in students' intellectual, social, and personal development. Properly organized collaborative learning environments can promote independent thinking, creativity, communication skills, and critical analysis. Through teamwork, students learn to exchange ideas, defend personal opinions, and solve problems collectively.

At the same time, several pedagogical and psychological challenges may limit the development of independent thinking during group activities. Passive participation, social conformity, and unequal task distribution can negatively affect students' intellectual autonomy. Therefore, teachers must apply effective instructional strategies that balance teamwork with individual responsibility and critical reflection.

Modern higher education should focus on student-centered methodologies that encourage both collaboration and independent intellectual activity. Developing independent thinking within teamwork is essential for preparing adaptable, creative, and socially responsible specialists for the future.



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