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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 today's information-rich society, developing critical thinking in 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 informed decisions are laid.

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

Critical thinking is a complex intellectual process aimed at meaningful perception, analysis, and evaluation of information in order to form reasoned judgments and make balanced decisions. It involves a person's active position

towards the acquired knowledge and the ability not only to assimilate information but also to analyze, interpret, and verify it.

In pedagogical context, critical thinking is considered as the learner's ability to understand the content of educational material, identify cause-and-effect relationships, compare different viewpoints, argue their own opinion, and draw independent conclusions. Unlike reproductive thinking, which focuses on simply reproducing knowledge, critical thinking is aimed at its deep understanding and meaningful application.

For elementary 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 understand the basis of one's own judgments. Thus, critical thinking forms students' mental work culture and contributes to the development of an independent, responsible, and active personality.

### **The importance of critical thinking in primary school**

Developing critical thinking in primary school is one of the key tasks of modern education, as 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 basics of learning ability.

Critical thinking contributes to the active involvement of primary school students 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.

Critical thinking is of particular importance for the development of children's intellectual abilities. In the process of analyzing, comparing, generalizing, and evaluating information, logical thinking, attention, memory, and speech are formed. Students learn to establish cause-and-effect relationships, draw conclusions, and justify their answers, which positively affects the quality of learning activities in all subjects.

Additionally, critical thinking plays an important role in the formation of primary school students' personal qualities. It fosters independence, responsibility, self-confidence, and the ability to make decisions. The child learns to defend their point of view, respect others' opinions, and adequately evaluate the results of their own activities, which is an important condition for successful socialization.

In the context of an information society, the importance of critical thinking increases even more. Even in primary school, children encounter a large amount of information, so

the ability to select reliable information, distinguish facts from opinions, and meaningfully perceive educational material becomes essential. Critical thinking helps to form information literacy and a stable cognitive interest.

The formation of critical thinking in primary school is carried out through various pedagogical methods and techniques. The most effective ones include:

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

Of particular importance is the role of the teacher, who is not only a source of knowledge but also 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 assimilate the learning material, effectively solve learning tasks, and navigate the information space. In addition, critical thinking contributes to the formation of a personality capable of self-development and conscious choice.

Thus, developing critical thinking in primary school students is one of the priority tasks of modern education. Systematic and purposeful work in this direction allows for the formation of children's 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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