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CRITICAL THINKING AS A SKILL OF THE 21ST CENTURY IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Critical thinking is not taught to develop.
Erzsebet Chibi

In my view the modern educational system of Ukraine is at the peak of educational reforms. The New Ukrainian School aims to form a competitive individual in the labour market, capable of lifelong learning and critical thinking, making decisions, setting goals and achieving them. Critical thinking, the ability to cooperate with other people, solve problems are the issues that education researchers have recognized as the most important for the XXI century.

In practice the problem of developing critical thinking in primary school learners is especially relevant, because the rapidly changing technological and social worlds require on the part of the learners different styles of thinking, forming and outlining their own vision of a situation, the ability to quickly rebuild in an unusual situation and achieve goals.

In other words the problem of developing critical thinking in the learning process is one of the most relevant for psychologists and educators. It is worth noting that it is inextricably connected to such a problem as the acquisition and application of knowledge by schoolchildren. Intellectual activity is a tool for acquiring knowledge and creative ways of behaviour.

There is still no clear definition of the possibilities and ways of developing critical thinking in pedagogical research, but it can be argued that during primary school (grades 1 to 4) it changes significantly.

But today, in the context of educational system reforms, the formation of students' ability to think creatively and critically is of paramount importance. Modern learners must have several features of critical thinking, first of all they must be conscious, responsible, purposeful, prudent, self-controlled, independent, self-analyzed, self-organized, disciplined, etc.

To start with a small number of researchers due to study the concept of critical thinking and analyzing their work we can say that the critical thinking is one of the leading types of human mental activity, which is characterized by a high level of perception. Critical thinking uses cognitive technologies or strategies that aim to increase the ability of achieving the desired result. This is the birth of new knowledge, taking into account existing experience and different points of view. The use of this type of thinking is most effective in solving problems, formulating conclusions and decision-making.

The analysis of theoretical and methodological psychological and pedagogical work of domestic and foreign researchers allows us to conclude that critical thinking of students is one of the important tasks in achieving the goals of the educational process. The level of critical thinking is limited to the amount of information received, but the ability to apply it in life. If students think critically, they will easily enter any phase of the lesson.

Secondly, critical thinking involves a natural way of interacting with ideas and information, thus preparing a smart, balanced approach to making complex decisions. To think critically means to have one's own opinion, to make a well-considered choice between different opinions, to solve problems, to argue using different arguments, to be able to appreciate someone else's point of view. Through critical thinking, the traditional process of cognition moulds individuality and becomes meaningful, continuous and productive.

Critical thinking is not a separate skill, but a set of many skills and abilities that are formed gradually during the development of children. It is formed faster if children are not passive listeners in lessons, but are constantly actively looking for information, correlating what they have learned with their own practical experience. In addition, students must learn (and teachers must help them in this) to question the accuracy and credibility of information, test evidence, draw conclusions, construct new examples for the use of theoretical knowledge, make decisions, study the causes and consequences of various phenomena.

Systematic inclusion of critical thinking in the educational process should form a special integration of thinking and cognitive activity.

Another basis for the development of critical thinking is the use of certain studying technologies in lessons. Within such there are many different techniques and methods used at each stage of the lesson: "Associations", "I know. Want to know. Learned", brainstorming, cluster, chamomile questions, tree of predictions, six hats, a letter in a circle, "catch a mistake", "snowflake meadow", "questions, reading with stops", etc. It is important to note that when applying any of the technologies for the development of critical thinking, the teacher must have a clear idea of what techniques and methods can be used at different stages of such learning.

The technological basis for critical thinking is a basic model of three stages: "Challenge – Comprehension – Reflection", which helps students to determine their own learning goals, as well as to actively search for information and reflect on what they have learned.

At the stage of **challenge**, the process of updating existing knowledge and ideas about the subject of study is unfolding in the minds of students. Due to this the participation of students in the learning process is intensified, since at this stage individual and group forms of work are combined, and as a result cognitive interest is formed. The final point of the challenge stage is students' independent determination concerning the purpose of further educational activities.

At the stage of **comprehension**, students join direct interaction with new information. They get the opportunity to think about the nature of the object under study, learn to formulate questions competently as the correlation of already known and new information, and, as a result of reflection, develop their own conclusions. It

is very important that at this stage the teacher helps students to follow the process of understanding new ideas. The most common methods here are: clarifying questions, reading with marks, reading with stops, and others.

In the third stage of *reflection* students consolidate new knowledge and actively restructure their own ideas in order to include new concepts, that is, there is a final assimilation of new material and the formation of reasoned ideas about the object under study. The basis for this stage (reflection) comprises the analysis of students' effectiveness of their own mental operations.

In conclusion, for the use of critical thinking technology the desire of the teacher is very important, his/her training and understanding that the main thing in teaching critical thinking is the experiencing of each new strategy, each technique and situation with students. This is the main difference between active and traditional forms of education. In our opinion, different forms of learning should be combined in the educational process. But in order to develop critical thinking as a skill for XXI century, it is important to build the educational process in a new way.

We can say that the concept of the New Ukrainian School pays considerable attention to the development of students' critical thinking during lessons. Cross-cutting skills according to the concept are as follows: reading comprehension, ability to express one's opinion orally and in writing, critical and systematic thinking, ability to logically justify one's position, creativity, initiative, risk assessment, decision making, problem solving, ability to work with other people, team spirit.

To sum up, it was established that today the problem of developing critical thinking in primary school students is relevant, because to develop thinking presupposes developing the ability to think. Thanks to the ability of a person to think in non-standard way, new vistas of solving problems are revealed, complex problems are solved, discoveries are made, inventions appear. In modern society, there is a demand for an educated, creative student who makes decisions independently, who can offer new ideas, ways to solve a problem.

Early school age is the age when the development of students is extremely diverse and dynamic. There are significant changes in various areas connected with improving various activities, including the development of critical thinking.

The educational process in Ukraine is being constantly modernized due to the introduction of new teaching methods and technologies.

The use of critical thinking technology in lessons involves an equal partnership between teacher and students, student and class. This variant of interaction in the learning process is manifested both in terms of communication and in terms of knowledge accumulation. When using the technology of critical thinking in primary school lessons, the teacher is no longer the main source of information when learning becomes a joint search for new knowledge.

From all this the questions arise: what one thinks concerning his/her ability to think critically being an integral part of the learning process? What methods would one use to improve the educational process?

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