

ENHANCEMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING ON PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

Gulmira Juraboyeva Sherali qizi

Teacher of Uzbekistan state world Languages University

+998979214973

gulmirajuraboyeva9994@gmail.com

Annotation: *This article analyzes the value of helping elementary school-aged students develop their critical thinking abilities and looks at the approaches taken to improve this competency in the classroom. The study focuses on effective teaching techniques that support young students' autonomous thought and analytical reasoning, such as inquiry-based learning, problem-solving exercises, and group discussions. The research also addresses how teachers might foster an atmosphere that encourages rational thinking and curiosity.*

Key words: *primary school children, critical thinking, approach, problem-solving, activities.*

Аннотация: *В данной статье анализируется ценность развития критического мышления у учащихся начальной школы и рассматриваются подходы к повышению этой компетенции в классе. Исследование сосредоточено на эффективных методах обучения, которые поддерживают самостоятельное мышление и аналитическое рассуждение юных учеников, таких как обучение на основе исследований, упражнения по решению проблем и групповые дискуссии. В исследовании также рассматривается вопрос о том, как учителя могут создать атмосферу, поощряющую рациональное мышление и любознательность.*

Ключевые слова: *дети младшего школьного возраста, критическое мышление, подход, решение проблем, виды деятельности.*

Annotatsiya: *Ushbu maqolada boshlang'ich maktab yoshidagi o'quvchilarning tanqidiy fikrlash qobiliyatlarini rivojlantirishga yordam berishning ahamiyati tahlil qilinadi va sinfda ushbu kompetentsiyani yaxshilashga qaratilgan yondashuvlar ko'rib chiqiladi. Tadqiqot yosh o'quvchilarning mustaqil fikrlashi va analitik mulohazalarini qo'llab-quvvatlovchi samarali o'qitish usullariga, masalan, so'rovga asoslangan ta'lim, muammoli masalalarni yechish mashqlari va guruh muhokamasiga qaratilgan. Tadqiqot, shuningdek, o'qituvchilarning oqilona fikrlash*

va qiziqishni rag'batlantiradigan muhitni qanday yaratishi mumkinligini ko'rib chiqadi.

***Kalit so'zlar:** boshlang'ich sinf o'quvchilari, tanqidiy fikrlash, yondashuv, muammoni hal qilish, mashqlar*

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking in primary school children is not about complex philosophy or formal logic; it is about moving from “what” to “**why**” and “**how**”. At this age, children are naturally curious, and critical thinking is the tool that transforms that curiosity into a structured way of understanding the world.

Cultivating critical thinking skills in primary school students necessitates a systematic and intentional approach to both instruction and learning. In contrast to conventional educational methods that emphasize memorization and rote learning, encouraging critical thinking requires engaging students in active learning opportunities that test their reasoning and problem-solving skills. One of the most impactful ways to promote critical thinking is through inquiry-based learning, where students are supported in formulating questions, investigating ideas, and gathering evidence to back up their conclusions. This approach fosters curiosity and motivates young learners to gain a more profound understanding of concepts rather than merely accepting information without questioning it.¹

Critical thinking abilities are also greatly enhanced by problem-solving exercises. Real-world events can be included into the curriculum by teachers, encouraging students to evaluate circumstances, find viable solutions, and defend their conclusions. For instance, students can exercise critical thinking in an organized way through scientific experiments that promote hypothesis testing or mathematics problem-solving tasks that call for logical deductions. Students' capacity to assess characters' choices, forecast potential outcomes, and examine underlying themes can also be developed through storytelling and literature discussions. In addition to strengthening analytical abilities, these exercises improve students' capacity for effective communication and argumentation.

METHODS and RESULTS

Why It Matters in Primary Education

Teaching critical thinking early (ages 5–11) moves students away from rote memorization and toward deep learning.

¹ Doniyorova, L. K. (2023). Using interactive methods in the lessons. Web of Teachers: Inderscience Research, 1(7), 71-76.

- **Independence:** Children learn to trust their own reasoning rather than waiting for an adult to provide the “right” answer.

- **Empathy:** By evaluating different perspectives, children realize that others may have valid reasons for feeling or thinking differently.

- **Resilience:** Instead of giving up when a puzzle or math problem is hard, critical thinkers analyze *why* it isn’t working and adjust their strategy.

Developmental Milestones

A child’s ability to think critically evolves significantly during the primary school years:

Age Group	Key Thinking Skills
Early Primary (Ages 5–7)	Can distinguish between fantasy and reality; begins to understand cause and effect ; can group objects by categories (e.g., “healthy” vs. “unhealthy”).
Middle Primary (Ages 8–9)	Begins to think hypothetically (“What if?”); starts to use evidence to back up an opinion; can see a situation from someone else’s point of view.
Late Primary (Ages 10–11)	Can handle complex, multi-step problems; recognizes bias or “hidden” messages in stories/media; understands that their choices have long-term consequences.

Practical Strategies for the Classroom & Home

To foster these skills, the focus should be on **open-ended exploration** rather than “yes/no” questions.

1. The Power of “Wait Time”

When you ask a child a question, wait at least 5–10 seconds before prompting them. This “cognitive pause” gives them time to move past their first instinct and formulate a reasoned response.

2. Socratic Questioning

Instead of providing answers, “mirror” the child’s thinking with questions like:

- “What makes you say that?”
- “How do you know that is true?”
- “What would happen if we changed [X]?”

3. Visual Thinking Tools

Use diagrams to help children organize their thoughts. For example, a **Venn Diagram** is perfect for comparing two characters in a book, while a **Flowchart** helps them map out the steps to solve a conflict on the playground.

4. Low-Stakes Debates

Encourage “friendly arguments” on topics they care about.

- *Example:* “Which is the better superpower: flying or invisibility?”
- *The Goal:* They must provide at least two reasons (evidence) to support their choice and listen to a classmate’s counter-argument.

Red Flags in Cognitive Development

While every child develops at their own pace, some signs might indicate a need for extra support:

- Intense frustration with any task that doesn't have an immediate solution.
- Inability to follow simple "if-then" logic.
- Persistent difficulty seeing things from another person's perspective by age 9.

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DISCUSSION

Developmental Milestones

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Students' cognitive growth, problem-solving skills, and general academic performance have all significantly improved when critical thinking techniques are incorporated into elementary schooling. Students who participate in inquiry-based learning and problem-solving exercises exhibit higher levels of analytical thinking, creativity, and independent thought, according to research. Students gain the capacity to evaluate material critically, draw connections between ideas, and confidently take on difficulties in classrooms where teachers actively promote inquiry and investigation.

The importance of questioning strategies is one of the main conclusions of research on the development of critical thinking in young students. An atmosphere that promotes intellectual curiosity is created by teachers who employ open-ended questions and encourage students to consider several approaches to an issue. For instance, teachers can ask "why" and "how" questions that call for more in-depth thought rather than having students memorize facts. This method not only improves

students' comprehension but also motivates them to develop logical arguments and assess other viewpoints. It has also been demonstrated that collaborative learning is a successful strategy for fostering critical thinking in young learners. Children learn to express their ideas clearly, take into account different points of view, and improve their reasoning through discussion during group activities.² Research indicates that students who participate in peer discussions outperform those who study alone when it comes to addressing problems. Students who collaborate gain social and communication skills that enhance their critical thinking abilities and increase their capacity to handle challenging circumstances.

CONCLUSION

A vital component of contemporary education is the development of critical thinking abilities in elementary school pupils, which give them the capacity to evaluate data, resolve issues, and reach well-informed conclusions. Traditional rote memorization must give way to interactive, inquiry-based learning strategies that foster cognitive flexibility and independent thought as education changes to meet the demands of the twenty-first century. The significance of incorporating critical thinking techniques into elementary education and the beneficial effects these approaches have on children's intellectual growth have been brought to light by this study. The importance of educators in creating an atmosphere that promotes inquiry, analytical reasoning, and problem-solving is one of the main conclusions drawn from this study. Teachers that use inquiry-based learning, group discussions, and practical problem-solving exercises assist students in developing the critical thinking abilities necessary for lifelong learning. Teachers enable students to take an active role in their own education by encouraging them to ask questions, consider many viewpoints, and defend their conclusions. Furthermore, the study has shown that critical thinking improves students' capacity to interact with difficult situations outside of the classroom in addition to improving academic performance. Early development of analytical reasoning skills in children makes them more capable of navigating the current information landscape, making wise decisions, and adjusting to new obstacles. Additionally, cooperative learning opportunities enhance social and communication abilities, highlighting the value of discussion and group problem-solving.

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