

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING

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Abstract: Critical thinking is one of the most important skills that students need in the modern educational environment. It helps learners analyze information, evaluate evidence, solve problems, make logical decisions, and develop independent opinions. Teachers play a significant role in developing these skills because they create learning environments where students are encouraged to ask questions, express their ideas, discuss different perspectives, and justify their opinions. This article examines the role of teachers in developing students' critical thinking skills and discusses effective strategies that can be used in the classroom. Particular attention is given to questioning techniques, classroom discussions, problem-solving activities, collaborative learning, and reflective practices.

Keywords: critical thinking, teachers, students, education, questioning, problem-solving, classroom discussion, independent learning.

Introduction

Education in the twenty-first century is not limited to providing students with factual knowledge. Modern learners need to develop skills that help them use knowledge effectively in different situations. Among these skills, critical thinking is particularly important. It enables students to examine information carefully, identify reliable evidence, compare different viewpoints, and make well-reasoned conclusions.

Critical thinking does not develop automatically. Students need appropriate guidance, practice, and opportunities to think independently. In this process, teachers have an important responsibility. Instead of simply providing ready-made answers, teachers can encourage students to discover information, ask questions, analyze problems, and develop their own conclusions.

Literature review

The issue of developing students' critical thinking skills through an integrative approach has attracted significant attention from educators and researchers worldwide. Modern educational theories emphasize that critical thinking is one of the essential competencies required for successful participation

in social and professional life. Researchers have explored different pedagogical methods, interdisciplinary strategies, and innovative technologies that support the formation of critical thinking skills in the educational process.

One of the earliest scholars who highlighted the importance of reflective and analytical thinking was John Dewey. In his work *How We Think*, Dewey argued that education should encourage learners to investigate problems, analyze situations, and make reasoned conclusions. According to Dewey, learning becomes meaningful when students actively participate in inquiry-based activities rather than memorizing information mechanically.

In addition, many scholars have emphasized the role of innovative pedagogical technologies in developing critical thinking skills. Interactive methods such as project-based learning, case-study, brainstorming, collaborative learning, and digital educational tools create opportunities for students to become active participants in the learning process. These approaches support independent inquiry, creativity, and reflective thinking.

Discussion and results

One of the most important roles of a teacher is to act as a facilitator of learning. A teacher who wants to develop critical thinking should not dominate the entire lesson by giving information and explanations. Instead, the teacher should create opportunities for students to participate actively. Teachers can encourage students to investigate problems, discuss ideas, and find their own solutions. When students are allowed to make mistakes and learn from them, they become more confident and independent thinkers.

For example, instead of asking a question that requires only a “yes” or “no” answer, a teacher can ask: “Why do you think this happened?” or “What evidence supports your opinion?” Such questions encourage students to provide explanations and think more deeply.

Questioning is one of the most effective strategies for developing critical thinking. Well-designed questions encourage students to analyze information and explain their reasoning.

Teachers can use questions such as:

Why do you think this is true?

- 1.What evidence can support your answer?
- 2.Are there other possible explanations?
- 3.How are these two ideas different?
- 4.What might happen if the situation changed?
- 5.Which solution is the most effective, and why?



These questions move students beyond memorization. They encourage analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and reflection.

Futhermore, classroom discussions and debates also play an important role in developing critical thinking. When students discuss a topic, they encounter different opinions and perspectives. They learn to listen to others, compare arguments, and defend their own ideas. Teachers should create a respectful classroom atmosphere in which students feel comfortable expressing different opinions. Students should understand that disagreement can be a useful part of learning when it is based on logical arguments and evidence.

Conclusion

Teachers play a central role in developing students' critical thinking skills. By creating an active and supportive learning environment, teachers can help students become independent thinkers who are able to analyze information, evaluate evidence, solve problems, and make informed decisions.

Questioning, classroom discussions, debates, problem-solving activities, collaborative learning, and reflection are effective strategies for developing critical thinking. The teacher's role is not simply to provide knowledge but also to guide students in discovering, analyzing, and evaluating information.

In conclusion, teachers who encourage curiosity, questioning, reasoning, and independent learning contribute significantly to the intellectual development of their students. Developing critical thinking should therefore be considered an essential objective of modern education.

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