



CRITICAL THINKING AS A KEY SKILL FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Zokirova Masuma Qahramonjon qizi

Turan International University

Email: masumazokirova@gmail.com

Phone: +998 90 222 27 59

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6454-971X>

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22248825>

Abstract: Critical thinking has become one of the most essential skills in the 21st century. The rapid development of technology, the growth of digital information, and the increasing complexity of social and professional life require individuals to think independently and make informed decisions. Critical thinking enables people to analyze information, evaluate evidence, identify reliable sources, solve problems, and make logical judgments. This article examines the importance of critical thinking as a key 21st-century skill and discusses its role in education, professional development, and everyday life. It also considers effective ways of developing critical thinking among students.

Keywords: critical thinking, 21st century skills, education, problem-solving, decision-making, information literacy, independent thinking.

Introduction

The modern world requires people to make decisions quickly and effectively. Students and professionals must deal with complex problems that often do not have simple answers. Critical thinking helps individuals understand these problems and consider different possible solutions.

One of the major challenges of the 21st century is information overload. People can easily access enormous amounts of information, but they must determine which information is trustworthy. Critical thinkers ask questions such as:

1. Who provided this information?
2. What evidence supports the claim?
3. Is the source reliable?
4. Are there alternative explanations?
5. Is the information based on facts or opinions?

These questions help individuals avoid misinformation and make better decisions.

Literature review

Critical thinking is the ability to think carefully, logically, and independently about information and ideas. It involves several processes, including analysis, interpretation, evaluation, reasoning, and reflection.



John Dewey emphasized the importance of reflective thinking and argued that people should carefully examine the reasons and evidence behind their beliefs. Similarly, Robert Ennis described critical thinking as reasonable and reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do.

Critical thinking does not mean criticizing everything. Instead, it means examining information objectively and making judgments based on evidence and logical reasoning.

Discussion and results

Education plays a major role in developing critical thinking. Modern teachers should not focus only on memorization and reproduction of information. They should create learning environments where students can ask questions, discuss ideas, solve problems, and express their own opinions

Interactive activities such as debates, discussions, brainstorming, problem-solving tasks, and project-based learning can encourage students to think critically. Students can also be asked to compare different sources, evaluate arguments, and explain why they agree or disagree with a particular position.

For example, instead of asking students simply to memorize information about climate change, a teacher can ask them to examine different sources, identify evidence, discuss possible causes, and evaluate potential solutions. This approach develops deeper understanding and analytical skills.

Problem-solving is closely connected with critical thinking. When people face a problem, they need to identify its causes, consider possible solutions, evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each solution, and select the most appropriate one.

Critical thinking helps individuals avoid making decisions based only on emotions or assumptions. Instead, they learn to examine evidence and consider possible consequences.

In professional life, these skills are particularly valuable. Doctors, engineers, teachers, managers, researchers, and other professionals regularly face complex situations that require careful analysis and informed decision-making

The development of the Internet and social media has made critical thinking even more important. False information, misleading advertisements, manipulated images, and unverified claims can spread quickly online.

Digital literacy and critical thinking therefore work together. Individuals should learn how to check the credibility of websites, compare information from different sources, identify biased arguments, and distinguish facts from opinions.





Students, in particular, need these skills because they frequently use digital resources for learning and communication. Teaching critical evaluation of online information can help young people become responsible digital citizens.

Critical thinking can be developed through regular practice and appropriate educational activities. Some effective approaches include:

1. encouraging students to ask questions;
2. using open-ended questions instead of questions with only one answer;
3. organizing debates and group discussions;
4. presenting real-life problems for analysis;
5. comparing different opinions and sources;
6. asking students to justify their answers with evidence;
7. encouraging reflection after learning activities;
8. using project-based and inquiry-based learning.

Teachers should also create a classroom environment where students feel comfortable expressing their opinions and asking questions. Respectful disagreement and discussion can help students understand different perspectives.

Conclusion

Critical thinking is one of the most important skills required in the 21st century. The rapid growth of information and technology has created new opportunities but has also made it more difficult to distinguish reliable information from misinformation. Critical thinking enables individuals to analyze information, evaluate evidence, solve problems, and make informed decisions. Education has a particularly important role in developing this skill. Teachers can encourage students to ask questions, discuss different perspectives, analyze evidence, and reflect on their own ideas. Through continuous practice, students can become independent and responsible thinkers. Critical thinking prepares individuals to meet the challenges of the modern world. It supports academic achievement, professional success, responsible citizenship, and effective everyday decision-making. Therefore, developing critical thinking should be a central goal of 21st-century education.

References:

1. Halpern, D. F. (2014). *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking*. New York: Psychology Press.
2. Facione, P. A. (2015). *Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts*. Insight Assessment, pp. 1–8.
3. Lipman, M. (2003). *Thinking in Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 15–35.





4. Siegel, H. (1988). Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking, and Education. New York: Routledge, pp. 1–20.\
5. Brookfield, S. D. (2012). Teaching for Critical Thinking. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 1–25.

