



TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CRITICAL THINKING IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract. in this thesis, the theoretical and practical aspects of the development of critical thinking processes in teachers and the features of their content creation in the process of primary education are mentioned.

Key words: Critical thinking, teachers' opinions, teacher training, primary education.

Critical thinking is a positive skill that allows us to successfully meet the demands of the 21st century, and helps us to better understand what we are learning and doing. Teaching critical thinking is also suitable for solving the task of forming qualified personnel who can find their place in the highly professionally cultured, creative and socially active life described in the National Personnel Training Program. So, what is critical thinking? Various definitions of this concept can be found in the literature.

Before we talk about this concept, let's look at some mental skills, but they cannot be called critical thinking. Memorization is the most important thinking process without which the learning process cannot be carried out, but it is fundamentally different from critical thinking. A computer's memory is far better than any of us, but memorization does not mean critical thinking. Most teachers value the development of memory more than any kind of thinking, and in tests and exams they mainly check the extent of students' memory. But supporters of critical thinking mean more complex types of mental activity.

Another type of non-critical thinking without which the educational process cannot be carried out is related to the understanding of complex ideas. In biology and mathematics, history and literature classes, students sometimes struggle to understand what the teacher says or what is written in the textbook. Comprehension is a complex mental process, especially if the learning material is difficult. For example, a student is struggling to understand a complex theorem. Of course, complex mental processes are going on in his brain, but even this cannot be called critical thinking.

As we work to understand what others think, our first stage of personal thinking is weak: we only perceive what has been created by someone before us, while critical thinking occurs when new, understood ideas are examined,





evaluated, developed, and maintained. It happens when running. Remembering evidence and understanding ideas are prerequisites for critical thinking, but they do not constitute critical thinking in their entirety.

Critical thinking recognizes the importance of strengthening the education system in order to develop students' thinking skills. Children's critical thinking skills mean, on the one hand, reasoning using fact-based knowledge and embracing open and inquiring thinking. However, to achieve this, schools need to integrate more practical activities into their curriculum to improve critical thinking. Although teachers, psychologists, and philosophers agree on the importance of critical thinking, there is still no agreement on what the concept means, and there is still debate about how teachers should be prepared to use it in practice. The main purpose of this study was to explore how primary school teachers perceive this concept and how they bring critical thinking experience as a professional background to their schools and classrooms.

A total of twenty-one teachers in three European schools in Brussels, Belgium were interviewed through semi-structured interviews. The results of this study indicate that teachers have a good understanding of the concept of critical thinking. They consider critical thinking to be the ability to analyze facts through various strategies, to perceive other hypothetical situations, and to form and refine personal opinions about concrete facts. According to the teachers, these are the main characteristics of a critical thinker: thinking about different cultural issues, cooperation, analytical and open thinking. In school teacher education, the results show, on the one hand, that mind mapping, group discussion, and active learning are relevant practices to consider for developing critical thinking in the classroom.

On the other hand, they emphasize that their experience is still limited. Regarding their professional experience, they indicate that they have encountered the promotion of critical thinking through project-based learning and philosophy for children during teacher training. At the same time, they emphasize that there is still a need to provide additional support in this area through the sharing of best practices in peer learning and teacher training. In conclusion, teachers need to be better prepared to teach critical thinking through existing practices in order to be adequately prepared to promote it in primary education. Focusing on teachers' perceptions, this study helps to identify the rationale for promoting 'Practical Contexts for Critical Thinking' in the context of the professional development of primary school teachers. The relevance of the results can be used for future educational research and design





among different stakeholders (teachers, school principals, policy makers, researchers) involved in innovative teaching methods in "Practical Contexts for Critical Thinking".

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