

**DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING:
SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION****Jumabaeva Malika Polatbek qızı**

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Abstract: *Critical thinking is a crucial skill for students to develop, particularly in primary education, as it lays the foundation for effective learning and problem-solving in later years. Encouraging young learners to think critically allows them to analyze, evaluate, and create knowledge rather than just memorize information. This paper explores specific strategies for developing critical thinking skills in primary education, emphasizing age-appropriate techniques and activities that can foster a thoughtful, analytical, and inquisitive mindset. It discusses various instructional approaches, including inquiry-based learning, problem-solving tasks, Socratic questioning, and collaborative learning, that engage students in deeper thinking and reflection.*

Keywords: *Critical thinking, primary education, problem-solving, inquiry-based learning, Socratic questioning, collaborative learning, metacognition, intellectual curiosity*

Critical thinking is a fundamental cognitive skill that helps students analyze situations, evaluate evidence, and make decisions based on reason and logic. In the context of primary education, the development of critical thinking lays the groundwork for lifelong learning, enabling students to engage in higher-order thinking and problem-solving throughout their academic journey and beyond. However, fostering critical thinking in young children requires more than traditional rote memorization or passive learning methods. Primary students need opportunities to engage in activities that encourage them to question, explore, and reflect on their own thinking. Teachers play a key role in facilitating this development by providing

the right environment and instructional strategies to challenge and inspire students to think critically.

This paper discusses specific strategies for nurturing critical thinking skills in primary education, exploring a variety of techniques that can be effectively used in the classroom. These strategies include inquiry-based learning, problem-solving, collaborative activities, and the use of questioning techniques that stimulate deeper thought.

Inquiry-based learning is an approach where students learn through asking questions, exploring problems, and seeking solutions, rather than receiving direct instruction. This method encourages curiosity and empowers students to take an active role in their learning process. At the core of inquiry-based learning is the process of asking open-ended, thought-provoking questions. Teachers can guide students to ask questions such as “What do you think will happen next?” or “Why do you think this is the case?” This encourages children to think critically about the world around them and seek evidence to support their ideas.[1,87] Teachers can provide opportunities for students to investigate topics in depth, either individually or in groups. For instance, students can conduct simple experiments or research a topic that interests them, fostering a deeper understanding of the material and encouraging them to form their own conclusions based on evidence. By connecting learning to real-world problems and scenarios, inquiry-based learning helps students understand the practical applications of what they are learning. This can make critical thinking more meaningful and relevant to their lives.

Problem-solving tasks are essential for developing critical thinking skills. They require students to think logically, apply what they know, and evaluate different approaches to find solutions.

- **Open-Ended Problems:** Provide students with open-ended problems that have multiple possible solutions. For example, asking students to design a new toy,

create a sustainable solution for an environmental issue, or come up with different ways to solve a math problem encourages them to think creatively and critically.

- **Scaffolded Problem Solving:** While it's important for students to work independently, scaffolding can help them develop the skills needed to solve complex problems. Teachers can break down a larger problem into smaller, more manageable tasks and guide students through the steps of problem-solving, helping them reflect on their thinking process along the way.
- **Encouraging Reflection:** After solving a problem, ask students to reflect on how they reached their solution. What strategies did they use? Would they approach the problem differently next time? Reflection helps students analyze their own thought processes and reinforces their ability to think critically.[2,34]

Socratic questioning is a technique that encourages students to think deeply and critically by asking thought-provoking questions. It involves asking questions that require more than a simple "yes" or "no" answer, prompting students to explain their reasoning and justify their ideas. Questions like "What evidence do you have for that answer?" or "Can you explain why you think that?" encourage students to think more deeply about their responses and consider alternative perspectives. Socratic questioning can lead to classroom debates where students are asked to present arguments for or against a particular idea. This helps them learn how to defend their reasoning, listen to different viewpoints, and critically evaluate the information. Teachers should avoid simply providing answers to questions. Instead, they should build on students' responses by asking further questions that encourage deeper exploration. This promotes intellectual curiosity and pushes students to think critically about the topic.

Collaboration among students fosters critical thinking by allowing them to discuss ideas, solve problems together, and challenge each other's viewpoints. Organizing students into small groups to discuss a problem or concept encourages them to share their thoughts and listen to others. This exchange of ideas promotes critical thinking

as students learn to evaluate, question, and refine their ideas based on input from their peers.[3] When students explain concepts to each other, they are forced to think critically about their own understanding and articulate their reasoning. Peer teaching reinforces learning and encourages a deeper engagement with the material. Collaborative learning helps students appreciate different viewpoints. When working with peers from diverse backgrounds, they are exposed to new ideas and ways of thinking, which can expand their critical thinking skills.

Metacognition, or the ability to think about one's thinking, is an essential aspect of critical thinking. Teaching students to reflect on their thought processes encourages them to become more aware of how they approach problems and make decisions. Teachers can model metacognitive thinking by verbalizing their own thought processes during problem-solving tasks. This helps students understand how to approach problems systematically and analyze their own thinking. Encouraging students to assess their own work and reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement fosters metacognition. Teachers can provide tools like rubrics or reflection journals to help students evaluate their progress and set learning goals. Encouraging students to set specific, achievable goals for their learning and periodically reflect on their progress helps them become more self-directed learners. This process reinforces the importance of critical thinking in achieving their academic objectives.

Developing critical thinking in primary education is essential for preparing students for the challenges of the future. By implementing strategies such as inquiry-based learning, problem-solving tasks, Socratic questioning, collaborative learning, and metacognitive reflection, educators can nurture young learners' ability to think critically, solve problems, and make reasoned decisions. These strategies not only enhance academic performance but also equip students with the intellectual skills they will need to navigate the complexities of an ever-changing world. Encouraging critical thinking at an early age empowers students to become independent,

thoughtful, and reflective learners, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and success.

References

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