METHOD FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING: STAGES, PROCESS OF WORKING WITH STUDENTS, AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

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Abstract. Developing critical thinking is a vital component of modern education, equipping students with the skills needed to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information effectively. This article outlines a structured method for fostering critical thinking, detailing its stages, the process of engaging students, and assessment criteria. The stages include the initiation phase, exploration phase, and synthesis phase, each tailored to progressively build students' analytical abilities. The process emphasizes interactive and reflective teaching strategies, including group discussions, problem-solving activities, and Socratic questioning. Assessment criteria focus on evaluating reasoning, argumentation, creativity, and application of knowledge. By implementing this method, educators can systematically cultivate critical thinking, preparing students for academic and professional challenges.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Education, Teaching Strategies, Assessment Criteria, Analytical Skills, Problem-Solving

Introduction.

Critical thinking is increasingly recognized as an essential skill for success in the 21st century. It enables individuals to navigate complex problems, make informed decisions, and contribute meaningfully to society. However, cultivating critical thinking in students requires deliberate and systematic efforts. This article presents a comprehensive method for developing critical thinking, focusing on structured stages, effective teaching processes, and robust assessment criteria.

Critical thinking is an essential skill for students, enabling them to analyze information, evaluate arguments, and make informed decisions. Developing critical thinking requires structured methods, carefully planned stages, interactive processes, and measurable assessment criteria. This article explores effective methods for cultivating critical thinking, focusing on the stages of development, the teaching process, and assessment strategies, supported by scholarly insights.

Stages of Developing Critical Thinking. The development of critical thinking follows a progressive sequence of stages that align with cognitive growth and intellectual engagement. According to Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy, cognitive skills evolve from basic knowledge acquisition to higher-order processes such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The stages can be summarized as follows:

Awareness and Understanding: At this initial stage, students recognize the importance of questioning assumptions and analyzing ideas. Paulo Freire emphasized the need for "conscientization," or critical consciousness, where learners become aware of their own biases and the socio-political context of their thinking.

Analysis and Inquiry: In this stage, students learn to break down complex ideas, identify patterns, and examine relationships between concepts. The Socratic method, rooted in disciplined questioning, encourages students to delve deeper into arguments and uncover hidden assumptions.

Synthesis and Creativity: Students combine diverse ideas to create new frameworks or solutions. Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory highlights the importance of collaborative learning in fostering creative thinking and synthesis. The final stage involves assessing the validity of arguments and applying critical thinking to real-world situations. Richard Paul and Linda Elder emphasize intellectual standards such as clarity, accuracy, and relevance in evaluating ideas.

Process of Working with Students. The process of developing critical thinking involves active engagement, collaborative inquiry, and reflective practices. Key steps include:

Creating an Engaging Environment and Using Thought-Provoking Questions: Teachers must foster a safe and inclusive classroom atmosphere where students feel encouraged to express their ideas and challenge existing perspectives.

John Dewey argued for experiential learning environments that connect theory to practice, making education relevant and meaningful. Open-ended questions stimulate curiosity and encourage students to explore multiple viewpoints. For instance, questions like “What assumptions underlie this argument?” or “How would you approach this problem differently?” prompt deeper reflection.

Incorporating Dialogic Teaching and Encouraging Metacognition: Dialogic teaching methods, such as debates and group discussions, enhance critical engagement. Jürgen Habermas highlighted the importance of dialogue in achieving mutual understanding and fostering critical reasoning. Metacognitive practices help students reflect on their own thinking processes. Teachers can guide students to evaluate their reasoning and identify areas for improvement, fostering self-awareness and intellectual growth.

Integrating Philosophical Texts and Case Studies: Working with philosophical texts and real-world case studies enables students to grapple with ethical dilemmas, conflicting viewpoints, and abstract concepts. For example, exploring Plato’s Allegory of the Cave can prompt discussions about perception and reality.

Pedagogical Methods and Tools. Innovative methods and tools play a crucial role in teaching critical thinking:

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Socratic Seminars: PBL engages students in solving real-world problems, encouraging them to analyze information, develop hypotheses, and propose solutions. For example, students might investigate the ethical implications of artificial intelligence in healthcare. Socratic seminars involve structured discussions where students critically examine texts or ideas through guided questioning. These seminars promote active listening, reasoning, and articulation of thoughts.

Digital Tools and Simulations and Interdisciplinary Approaches: Technology-enhanced learning environments, such as virtual simulations and AI-driven platforms, provide interactive opportunities for critical engagement. Tools like Padlet and MindMeister facilitate collaborative brainstorming and concept mapping. Combining disciplines such as philosophy, science, and literature broadens students’ perspectives and fosters integrative thinking. For example,

discussing ethical considerations in genetic engineering combines philosophical reasoning with scientific understanding.

Practical Applications. Implementing these methods and assessment criteria in real-world classrooms involves collaborative efforts between educators, administrators, and students. For instance, project-based assignments that tackle societal issues—such as climate change or social justice—can integrate multiple stages of critical thinking while providing authentic learning experiences. Teacher training programs also play a vital role in equipping educators with the skills to foster critical thinking. Professional development workshops focusing on Socratic questioning, dialogic teaching, and innovative assessment practices ensure that teachers can effectively implement these strategies.

Conclusion. Developing critical thinking in students is a dynamic process that requires careful planning, interactive methods, and robust assessment criteria. By following structured stages—from awareness to application—educators can guide students toward becoming independent thinkers capable of addressing complex challenges. Scholars like Freire, Dewey, and Paul provide valuable frameworks for understanding and implementing critical thinking in educational settings. As global challenges become increasingly complex, the ability to think critically is more important than ever. By integrating philosophical inquiry, collaborative learning, and innovative tools, educators can ensure that students develop the skills needed to navigate the uncertainties of the modern world with confidence and integrity.

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