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METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT THINKING SKILLS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS UNDER A COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH

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Abstract
This article examines the scientific and methodological foundations of developing independent thinking skills among primary school students in the context of a competency-based approach.

Keywords: Competency-based approach, independent thinking, primary school, cognitive activity, critical thinking, problem-based learning.

Introduction

In the modern education system, the formation of a person's intellectual independence has become one of the priority pedagogical tasks. In the context of globalization and the rapid development of information technologies, it is increasingly important for a child not merely to passively assimilate ready-made knowledge, but to think independently, solve problems, and find creative solutions.

Within the framework of educational reforms in the Republic of Uzbekistan, the "Concept for the Development of Preschool Education and School Education until 2030," adopted in 2020, established the implementation of learner-centered and competency-based approaches in primary education. This document emphasizes the need to form cognitive, communicative, creative, and social

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competencies among primary school pupils. However, the analysis of practice shows that many primary school teachers still use traditional reproductive methods, in which pupils mainly memorize and repeat ready-made information. Such an approach does not develop independent thinking; on the contrary, it generates intellectual passivity. Psychological research proves that the ability to think independently is one of the key factors of success in human life. J. Dewey's theory of reflective thinking, B. Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, and L.S. Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development all substantiate that independent thinking can and must be purposefully developed at primary school age. The relevance of the study is determined by the following factors: first, the inclusion of the competency-based approach in national educational standards; second, the insufficient development of a special methodology for developing independent thinking among primary school pupils; and third, the need to eliminate the contradiction between existing pedagogical theory and practice.

The competency-based approach requires pupils not only to master knowledge, but also to apply it independently in different situations. This creates the following contradiction: standards require competency-based development, while many pedagogical methodologies still function on the basis of a knowledge transmission model. Research also indicates that independent thinking skills formed at an early stage in primary school are preserved and continue to develop later in secondary and higher education. Therefore, primary education is a "critical period" for forming intellectual independence.

The competency-based approach is a relatively new direction in educational theory. It is aimed not merely at forming knowledge and skills in pupils, but at developing their ability to apply them freely and purposefully in life and professional situations. Researcher J. Raven (1984) defines competence as "an integrated set of knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal qualities necessary for the effective performance of a particular activity." A.V. Khutorskoy divides learning competencies into general educational, meta-subject, and subject-specific types and emphasizes that each of them should contribute to the holistic development of the learner's personality.

The concept of independent thinking has been interpreted differently in philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy. From a philosophical point of view, it denotes the freedom of a person to reason subjectively, make judgments, and draw conclusions. From a psychological perspective, based on J. Piaget's theory of

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operational thinking, independent thinking is understood as the process of sensing a disturbance of equilibrium (disequilibrium) in problem situations and restoring that equilibrium. From a pedagogical perspective, independent thinking appears as the pupil's ability to discover new knowledge and solutions through personal intellectual effort without relying on external instructions or ready-made answers. Bloom's taxonomy serves as an important theoretical basis for the methodology of developing independent thinking. Bloom divides the cognitive domain into six levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, and creation. The first three levels are associated with reproductive thinking, while the latter three are related to productive, independent thinking. The fact that primary education often remains at the lower three levels hinders the development of independent thinking.

The distinctive features of primary school pupils' thinking are as follows. First, at this age, a transition takes place from visual-imaginative thinking to logical-abstract thinking. Experimental studies conducted by D.B. Elkonin and V.V. Davydov show that by the age of 7-8, a child develops the ability to form an "internal plan of action" and can perform mental operations inwardly. This creates a psychological foundation for developing independent thinking in pupils.

Second, at early school age, learning is the leading activity. In this process, pupils develop learning motives, self-control, and assessment skills. L.I. Bozhovich's studies show that whether learning motivation takes an internal form, such as cognitive interest, or an external form, such as grades and praise, directly influences independent thinking activity.

Third, at this age, the child gradually overcomes the "ego-centered" position, or egocentrism, and begins to accept other points of view. This circumstance increases the effectiveness of communication-based teaching methods, such as discussion and group exchange of ideas.

This study experimentally proved that, under the conditions of a competency-based approach, it is possible to develop independent thinking skills among primary school pupils and that this development can be significantly accelerated through specific methodological tools:

– The systematic use of problem-based learning, the INSERT technique, the cluster method, and project-research methods significantly develops all components of independent thinking among primary school pupils, namely fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

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– As a result of the six-month experimental education program, the general indicator of independent thinking increased by 34.1% in the experimental group, while the growth in the control group was only 5.9%.
– To develop independent thinking skills, the teacher must assume the role of facilitator, problem situations must be created in the lesson, and pupils must be given time for independent inquiry.
– To fully implement the competency-based approach in primary education, it is necessary to ensure the special methodological preparation of teachers.
The results of the study can be applied in the fields of primary education methodology, educational psychology, and teacher retraining.

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