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PEDAGOGICAL POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING IN STUDENTS THROUGH EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

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Annotation
This article presents insights and observations regarding the theoretical-methodological foundations, didactic possibilities, and effective pedagogical mechanisms for developing students' critical thinking during extracurricular activities.

Keywords: critical thinking, intellectual, subject, information, analysis, reflection, tendency.

Introduction

In the modern educational paradigm, the development of students' critical thinking competence stands out as a significant pedagogical challenge; fostering these qualities, particularly at the primary education stage, establishes a solid foundation for subsequent levels of schooling. In this context, extracurricular activities offer extensive pedagogical opportunities to stimulate students' cognitive engagement and to develop their skills in making independent decisions, analyzing problematic situations, and substantiating their own viewpoints. This is because the time allotted during lessons is insufficient to fully develop all required competencies; consequently, the cultivation of students' independent thinking, creativity, research skills, and social engagement is

primarily achieved through extracurricular activities. This study provides a scientific foundation for the theoretical-methodological bases, pedagogical potential, and effective mechanisms for developing critical thinking in primary school students within the context of extracurricular activities.

Observations. Leading pedagogical scholars in our country have conducted a number of fundamental studies aimed at improving the conceptual foundations, didactic support, and methodological system regarding this issue. Their research explores various pedagogical and psychological aspects of extracurricular activities. In particular, within the framework of the conceptual perspectives and results achieved in this field, the following scientific approaches are worth highlighting:

A.A. Asqarov places particular emphasis on the pedagogical conditions for improving the content, criteria, and integrated methodological system for fostering a healthy lifestyle among students through extracurricular activities. In his view, organizing this process based on cognitive approaches and principles of adaptive connectivity serves to intensively develop students' self-assessment capabilities, reflective skills, and knowledge.[4]

M.B. Akhmedov places particular emphasis on the conditions for improving the model, methodological system, and opportunities for developing students' creative activity within extracurricular pursuits—specifically, in wood-carving clubs. In his view, organizing this process based on the principles of pedagogical historical continuity, interdisciplinary integration, and adaptive didactics serves to stimulate students' motivation to independently model both simple and complex imagery, while fostering the intensive development of their individual and non-standard creative skills.[5]

A.A. Kasimov specifically highlights the characteristics and mechanisms for developing the creative abilities of primary school students during extracurricular activities, as well as the conditions for refining a model for the development of creative competencies. In his view, organizing this process based on concepts of evolution and "innovative professions"—along with the principles of holism and person-centered education—helps to foster divergent and creative thinking skills in students through heuristic games, while also intensively developing their capacity to make independent and autonomous decisions.[6]

Discussion and Results. Summarizing the points above, it can be stated that existing definitions generally interpret extracurricular activities as a means for fostering an individual's overall development, independent thinking, and practical skills. However, in these definitions, the competence of critical thinking is not identified as a distinct focus; rather, it is merely mentioned in a general sense as one facet of independent thinking. Therefore, within the scope of this study, we propose the following original definition:

Extracurricular activities are specially planned pedagogical endeavors that serve as an integral part of the educational process. Beyond deepening the knowledge of primary school students and fostering independent learning skills, they are purposefully and systematically designed to develop the ability to analyze evidence, compare diverse perspectives, and draw well-founded conclusions—in other words, to cultivate the competence of critical thinking.

The proposed definition differs from previous approaches in two respects: first, it distinguishes critical thinking not as a component of general independent thinking, but as a separate, distinct competency that can be purposefully developed; second, it is specifically tailored to the developmental characteristics of primary school-aged children—a departure from most prior research (such as

that of Tilakova, Xojanov, and Yusupov), which has primarily focused on students in middle or upper grades.

The purpose of extracurricular activities is not limited solely to the meaningful organization of students' free time. They are also aimed at identifying and developing students' personal interests, abilities, and needs; ensuring the continuity of the educational and upbringing process; supporting socialization; and fostering the core competencies essential for modern life. In this respect, extracurricular activities integrate the developmental, educational, and innovative functions of schooling.

The realization of these objectives is ensured through the following tasks:

Consolidating and expanding knowledge. Creating opportunities for students to review and deepen the knowledge acquired during lessons, and to apply it in practical situations.

Developing independent learning competence. Fostering in students the skills to independently search for, analyze, select, and synthesize information, and to use it effectively.

Developing critical and logical thinking. Teaching students to evaluate evidence, compare different perspectives, analyze problems, draw well-founded conclusions, and make independent decisions.

Developing creative potential. Supporting students' creative thinking, the generation of innovative ideas, the discovery of non-standard solutions, and their research capabilities.

Formation of communicative competences. To develop the skills of expressing one's opinion clearly and reasonably, listening to the opinions of others, civilized participation in debates, and effective cooperation in a team.

Identifying and developing personal abilities and interests. Unlocking each student's individual potential, supporting their talents, and assisting in the formation of their professional direction.

Strengthening spiritual and moral upbringing. Fostering patriotism, civic responsibility, respect for national and universal human values, ecological culture, and values related to a healthy lifestyle.

Developing social engagement. Encouraging students to actively participate in community work, social projects, volunteer activities, and various competitions and events.

Developing digital and information competencies. Making effective use of modern information and communication technologies, working with digital resources, and developing media literacy.

Ensuring the continuity of education and upbringing. Reinforcing the knowledge and educational concepts acquired during lessons through extracurricular activities, and strengthening the link between theory and practice.

Conclusion

In summary, it can be stated that extracurricular activities are not merely an adjunct to the educational process, but rather an integral and strategic component of it. They represent an effective form of education that ensures the comprehensive development of students, prepares them for independent learning, fosters modern competencies, and creates a favorable pedagogical environment—particularly for the development of critical thinking.



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