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METHODS OF FORMING CRITICAL THINKING IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMANITARIAN PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the problem of developing critical thinking in the modern educational system. The paper analyzes the relationship between the development of critical thinking and humane pedagogy. The work aims to systematize the methods that contribute to the development of this type of thinking in the context of humane pedagogy. The study uses the works of researchers such as Kluster, S. I. Zair-Bek and I. V. Mushtavinskaya, R. Pole and L. Elder, M. Lipman, R. Ennis, Sh. A. Amonoshvili, and others.

Keywords: critical thinking, education system, reflection, pedagogy, humane pedagogy, methods

Introduction

In today's context of the increasing role of information due to the development of technology in various fields, it is crucial to have the ability to objectively and critically analyze incoming data in order to distinguish between truth and deliberate attempts to mislead. In such a situation, critical thinking becomes a key competency of the 21st century. The development of critical thinking can be traced back to family upbringing, where parents engage their children in various educational games and foster a culture of reading and critical thinking. However, the development of critical thinking is primarily influenced by the school environment. However, in the school system, the development of critical thinking

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can be misinterpreted, leading to the erroneous belief that it solely involves a set of analytical and cognitive exercises that may not have a significant value or cultural impact. This issue can hinder the application of critical thinking skills in real-life situations.

In the development of critical thinking in the school education system, we can see a certain contradiction. On the one hand, modern educational programs are designed to foster critical thinking, but on the other hand, authoritarian teaching methods and technologies hinder this process, as these forms of interaction between teachers and students do not promote trust, high communication culture, or a safe classroom environment. This contradiction arises due to the lack of humanization in the educational environment.

Research Goals and Objectives

Based on the outlined problems, the purpose of our research is to systematize the methods of forming critical thinking in the context of humane pedagogy. The objectives of our research are as follows: to explain the concept of "critical thinking"; to identify the principles of humane pedagogy that influence the development of students' thinking; to systematize the methods of forming critical thinking within the framework of humane pedagogy.

The object of the study is the educational and upbringing processes in the school education system. **The subject** of the study is the methods of forming critical thinking in the context of humane pedagogy.

Analysis of the literature studied. As part of this research, we analyzed the works of such scientists and researchers as Kluster, S. I. Zair-Bek and I. V. Mushtavinskaya, R. Pole and L. Elder, M. Lipman, R. Ennis, Sh. A. Amonshvili, S. A. Kuznetsov, N. M. Naumenko, and others.

Research Methods

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The methodology of this study is of a theoretical and analytical nature and is based on the following methods: analysis of scientific sources, comparative analysis of approaches, synthesis, and deduction.

Results and Discussions

In order to further examine the methods of developing critical thinking, it is necessary to define the concepts of "critical thinking" and "humane pedagogy." In Kluster's study "What is Critical Thinking," critical thinking is characterized by five components:

- Critical thinking is independent thinking;
- Information is the starting point, not the end point, of critical thinking;
- Critical thinking begins with asking questions and identifying problems that need to be solved;
- Critical thinking seeks to provide convincing arguments;
- Critical thinking is a social process. [1]

From this definition, we can conclude that, in D. Kluster's understanding, critical thinking is a multi-component process that includes both independent and social dimensions and is grounded in skills of working with information, formulating questions, and finding solutions through argumentation. S. I. Zair-Bek and I. V. Mushtavinskaya define critical thinking as "a point of support for human thinking, a natural way of engaging with ideas and information" [2, p. 12].

In the study by Richard Paul and Linda Elder, we encounter a different interpretation of critical thinking. For them, critical thinking is "self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It requires rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use. It entails effective communication and problem-solving skills and a commitment to overcoming native egocentrism and sociocentrism" [3].

M. Lipman understands critical thinking as "the ability to make reasonable and responsible judgments, based on criteria of self-correction and sensitivity to context" [4]. R. Ennis defines critical thinking as "reasonable reflective thinking

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aimed at distinguishing truth from falsehood” and identifies within it such elements as evaluating the credibility of sources, identifying different types of statements, the ability to ask precise questions, and others [5, p. 101].

Based on the interpretations presented above, we can conclude that critical thinking is viewed as reflective and evaluative thinking that requires formulating and solving problems through the analysis of information and verifying its truthfulness by using objective and reliable arguments to reach a conclusion. It also necessarily involves adherence to certain criteria of reasoning and a person’s readiness for self-correction when logical errors in thinking are identified.

Critical thinking in the educational environment cannot develop under conditions of psychological and personal pressure on students, nor in situations where the teacher’s judgment is treated as the prevailing opinion. For its effective development, a pedagogical environment is required that places the child’s personality first, taking into account the learner’s psychological and individual characteristics and preferences. Such an environment is provided by humane pedagogy, which is based on the following postulates: “faith in the child’s potential, the раскрытие of the child’s unique nature, respect for and affirmation of the child’s personality, and guiding the child toward serving goodness and justice” [6, p. 24].

In humane pedagogy, students are the principal subjects of learning, developing within an environment aimed at comprehensive growth and education, with due regard for their right to respect for personal dignity. As emphasized earlier, the effective development of critical thinking requires an environment that supports the раскрытие of learners’ inner potential without moral pressure from the teacher. D. Kluster noted that “teachers working within the critical thinking approach pay great attention to cultivating qualities necessary for productive exchange of opinions: tolerance, the ability to listen to others, and responsibility for one’s own viewpoint” [1]; therefore, a reconsideration of pedagogical methods and technologies is necessary. The development of critical thinking is

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determined not only by specific sets of tasks, but also by the formation of a culture of discussion, expressed in the ability “to be tolerant of viewpoints different from one’s own” [2, p. 10], in “effective interaction with others in order to find solutions to complex problems” [3], and so forth.

Humane pedagogy thus serves as a condition under which critical thinking develops effectively and sustainably. It relies on methods that make it possible to foster students’ moral and spiritual qualities as well as their intellectual abilities. Below, we consider the methods used in humane pedagogy.

Dialogic Methods

The essence of dialogic methods lies in organizing discussion in which, through guiding questions, clarification, and argumentation, the learner’s thinking begins to analyze the information available at a given moment more thoroughly. In humane pedagogy, dialogic methods are important insofar as they acknowledge the child’s right to express an opinion, even if it is still in the process of formation. Dialogic methods pursue the following aims:

- developing skills of argumentation and counterargumentation in making judgments;
- developing the ability to ask well-grounded questions;
- fostering a culture of interpersonal communication, among others.

In the context of dialogic methods, the following formats of discussion may be used:

• **Socratic dialogue (Socratic conversation).** Here, the teacher, through guiding and clarifying questions, leads the student to formulate their own conclusion [7, p. 10].

• **Problem-based discussion.** The teacher proposes a specific problem or case without presenting a ready-made solution. Students offer their solutions, which may be challenged by others.

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• **Discussion circle / round table.** The teacher sets the topic of the discussion, and students speak in turn, focusing not on the speaker's personality but on the quality of the reasoning. The emphasis is placed on constructive criticism and on the ability to listen to one's interlocutor by asking specific questions.

• **Debates.** The teacher discusses the rules of debate with the students, emphasizing respect, the use of evidence, and related principles. The issues are examined in greater detail and from multiple perspectives.

Problem-based and inquiry methods. This group of methods is aimed at addressing real or simulated problems posed to students. In turn, by considering different possible answers, students are expected to develop an evidence-based solution to the problem at hand. The aims of problem-based and inquiry methods include:

- developing skills of generating hypotheses and verifying them;
- developing cause-and-effect analysis skills;
- teaching students to apply knowledge in practice, among others.

In the learning process, the teacher may use the following methods:

• **Problem-based learning.** This method "involves creating a problem situation that requires resolution" [8, p. 44]; in other words, the lesson begins not with an explanation of the topic but with working through a situation. Learners propose hypotheses, confirm or refute them with evidence, and draw conclusions.

• **The case method.** The teacher presents a thematic case, which may include moral dilemmas, real-life social situations, or historical events, for further work on tasks posed to students.

• **Mini-research activities.** Students are given questions or topics; the format and plan of work are explained, along with a deadline for submission. Subsequently, students develop skills of independent learning, data search and collection, and conclusion formulation.

• **The project method.** Students create a project that may be presented in the form of a presentation, model, product, concept, and so forth. Taking students'

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individual characteristics into account, the teacher may offer several project types from which to choose.

Methods of working with information and argumentation. This group of methods is aimed at developing information-handling skills, which constitute the foundation of critical thinking. The objectives of these methods are:

- to increase the level of information literacy;
- to develop skills for analyzing data from various sources, among others.

The following methods may be applied within this group:

- **The intellectual game “Fact–Opinion–Interpretation.”** Students are given cards with statements that they must sort into three columns. The teacher evaluates not the final answer, but the reasoning process itself.
- **Working with texts.** The teacher provides a specially prepared text containing logical errors. Students’ task is to identify these errors and justify their choices.
- **Constructing an argument map.** The teacher proposes a claim that must be justified or refuted. Students learn to formulate theses, find supporting evidence, and draw conclusions.

Reflective Methods

In explanatory dictionaries, reflection is traditionally defined as “thinking about one’s feelings; analyzing one’s experiences” [9]. In humane pedagogy, reflection is assigned a distinct role, as it increases students’ awareness and responsibility for their actions and words. For critical thinking, reflective methods create conditions for self-analysis and for reconsidering one’s own values and beliefs. Methods based on reflection may vary; however, we highlight key approaches such as keeping a reflective journal or diary in which students describe their emotions and state during learning. It is also appropriate to include the methods identified by N. M. Naumenko and O. S. Sharygina—“Justifying one’s answer,” “Smiley faces,” “Sun,” “My multicolored mood,” “The ladder of success,” “The tree of success,” and others [10].

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Value- and Ethics-Based Methods

These methods are aimed at fostering students' spiritual and moral values grounded in critical thinking. Here, critical thinking functions not merely as a cognitive tool but as a foundation for making thoughtful and responsible choices with an understanding of their consequences. It enables students to perceive values not as something imposed from outside, but as a necessity of human existence—an idea that is substantiated within humane pedagogy. The objectives of this method are:

- developing empathy and respect for others;
- fostering an understanding of the consequences of each decision;
- cultivating students' moral and ethical values, among others.

Key methods within this group include:

- **Working with moral dilemmas** (students encounter situations in which there is no unambiguous answer);
- **Positional (role-based) analysis.** Students learn to consider situations or questions from different perspectives—for example, from the standpoint of parents, teachers, classmates, and so forth;
- **Ethical evaluation and self-evaluation.** In applying this method, the teacher may draw on examples from fiction, historical figures, and historical events to discuss motives, circumstances, and the actions of central characters. By analyzing and interpreting information, students compare these cases with their own life attitudes and ethical values.

Conclusion

In summary, we may argue that critical thinking in the educational process encompasses not only a set of cognitive skills, but also the ability to generate hypotheses, reason independently, work with information sources, and justify one's judgments. Having analyzed definitions of critical thinking proposed by such scholars as D. Kluster, S. I. Zair-Bek and I. V. Mushtavinskaya, R. Paul and

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L. Elder, M. Lipman, and R. Ennis, we conclude that an important component of this type of thinking is its social and communicative dimension, which is reflected in a person's culture of communication and behavior, including the development of a conscious and responsible attitude toward one's actions.

The analysis also shows that humane pedagogy provides the necessary conditions under which critical thinking becomes stable and practically meaningful, since its core ideological principles include respect for the learner's personality, recognition of the right to a subjective opinion, and consideration of students' individual and psychological characteristics, among others.

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