



FORMING MEDIA CULTURE AND CRITICAL THINKING IN STUDENTS

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Abstract

This article analyzes the relevance, theoretical foundations, and practical methods of developing media culture and critical thinking skills in students. The role of media education in the information society and the need to develop immunity against fake news are highlighted based on scientific sources.

Keywords: media culture, critical thinking, media education, information literacy, digital competence.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, as a result of the sharp increase in the flow of information, the correct orientation of young people in the media space has become an important issue. Especially in the higher education system, the formation of students' media culture and training them in critical thinking is one of the priority areas of modern pedagogy.

According to UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), media education develops people's skills in analyzing, evaluating and creating information, which is an essential element of a democratic society.

The concept of media culture and its importance. Media culture is the degree to which a person interacts with the media in a conscious, critical, and responsible manner. It includes the following components:

- receiving and understanding information;

- information analysis;
- creating media products;
- compliance with information security.

Studies show that media literate individuals are much better at identifying fake news. For example, a study by Stanford University found that 80% of students could not distinguish between advertising and real news. This shows the need for media education.

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze information, compare evidence, and draw independent conclusions. It includes the following stages:

1. Information reception. The first stage of critical thinking is the reception of information. A person receives information from various sources - the Internet, television, social networks, books, scientific articles, and the media. Due to the overwhelming amount of information in the modern information space, it is necessary to form the skills of sorting information in students. Because not all information is reliable or useful. For example, a student who reads a message spread on social networks should not immediately accept it as true, but should pay attention to its source.

2. Asking questions. One of the important signs of critical thinking is the ability to ask questions. Asking questions encourages a person to think actively and helps to study information more deeply. By asking questions, the student begins to understand the hidden meanings of information. This is especially important when analyzing advertising, propaganda or manipulative materials. From a pedagogical point of view, the teacher must teach students to ask questions openly and freely. Because the student who asks questions becomes an active seeker, not a passive listener.

3. To analyze. It is the process of breaking down information into parts and identifying causes and effects. This stage is a central part of critical thinking.

4. Evaluation. In the evaluation stage, the student determines the reliability and relevance of the information. It is very important at this stage to understand the difference between fact and opinion. For example, information in a scientific article and an anonymous blog are not equally reliable. The student must be able to understand this difference.

5. Conclusion. The final stage of critical thinking is inference, in which the student comes to an independent opinion through analysis and evaluation.

The stages of critical thinking are interconnected, and together they form the student's media culture. Through conscious perception of information, questioning, analyzing, evaluating and drawing reasonable conclusions, the student is formed as an independent and active person in the modern information space. Therefore, the widespread use of interactive methods and media education technologies aimed at developing critical thinking skills in the higher education system is of great importance.

American scholar R. Ennis defines critical thinking as "decision-making through logical and reflective thinking."

There are also methods for developing media literacy and critical thinking in students. These include the following.

1. Use of media education technologies

- Teaching through videos, podcasts, blogs
- Using interactive platforms
- Organizing online analytical training sessions

2. Case-study method. Students are given real media examples and through them develop analytical skills.

3. Debates and discussions can be exemplified by comparing different points of view and expressing opinions based on evidence.

4. Through fact-checking exercises, students examine sources and assess the reliability of information.

5. They can learn how to blog, make videos, and develop content for social media when creating media products.

This process serves to develop students not only as consumers but also as creators.

Research shows that:

- Critical thinking increased by 30–40% in groups where media education was used;

- students have become more careful in choosing information;
- The level of independent thinking has increased significantly.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that the formation of media culture and critical thinking in students is an important task of the modern education system. This process develops not only the skills of correctly perceiving information, but also its analysis and evaluation. Through the effective use of media education technologies, it is possible to protect young people from information attacks and form them as conscious individuals.

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13. [Stanford Online Information Credibility Study](#)— a scientific study on information verification skills among fact-checkers, students, and historians.