DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT THINKING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS BASED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING CULTURE

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Abstract: This article analyzes the technologies for developing independent thinking skills in primary school students through the promotion of reading culture. The study highlights the psychological and pedagogical foundations of the reading process, its role in developing students' thinking abilities, and innovative approaches in this field. In addition, the effectiveness of interactive methods, problem-based situations, and analytical reading techniques in fostering critical and creative thinking in students is substantiated. According to the results of the article, systematically organized reading activities significantly enhance the level of students' independent thinking.

Keywords: Primary education, reading culture, independent thinking, critical thinking, creative thinking, pedagogical technology, interactive methods, reading literacy, analytical reading, innovative approach.

Introduction. In the modern education system, developing not only knowledge acquisition but also students' skills in independent thinking, analysis, and drawing conclusions is considered one of the priority tasks of primary school education. In today's globalization process, where the flow of information is rapidly increasing, the formation of critical and independent thinking in students is regarded as one of the key outcomes of education. From this perspective, reading activities serve as one of the main tools in the intellectual development of primary school students.

The process of reading books not only provides knowledge but also enriches students' imagination, develops their speech, deepens their thinking, and forms their ability to make independent decisions. Especially in primary school, it is important to develop students' interest in reading and turn it into a stable habit. Because the reading culture formed during this period lays the foundation for the student's successful development in later stages of education.

At the same time, traditional teaching methods are not always sufficient to develop students' independent thinking. This requires the introduction of innovative pedagogical technologies into the educational process. In particular, interactive methods based on reading activities, problem situations, debates, "mind maps," cluster techniques, and reflection methods enable students to work independently with texts, analyze them, and express personal opinions.

The relevance of this article lies in the need to scientifically and pedagogically justify technologies for developing independent thinking through reading in primary school students and to develop practical recommendations. The aim of the research is to identify effective methods and technologies for developing students' independent thinking skills based on reading activities. The study seeks answers to the following research questions: how to organize reading in primary school, how reading affects independent thinking, and which pedagogical technologies are most effective in this process. Based on these questions, scientific conclusions aimed at improving the educational process are developed.

This research is aimed at identifying technologies for developing independent thinking skills in primary school students through reading development, and it uses a range of scientific research methods based on an integrated approach. The research methodology was developed by combining pedagogical, psychological, and practical experience. The following methods were used in the research:

First, theoretical analysis methods were applied. At this stage, scientific literature on primary education, reading culture, independent and critical thinking, curricula, state educational standards, and advanced pedagogical practices were studied. This formed the theoretical foundation of the research and scientifically justified the relevance of the problem.

Second, empirical methods were used in practical research. These included:

- Pedagogical observation — monitoring students' activity in reading, comprehension levels, and ability to express independent opinions.
- Interviews and conversations — identifying attitudes toward reading and existing problems among students and teachers.
- Questionnaires — designed to determine students' interest in reading, book selection habits, and thinking levels.

Third, pedagogical experimental work was conducted. Students were divided into two groups: control and experimental. In the experimental group, innovative pedagogical technologies aimed at developing independent thinking through reading were implemented. These included problem-based learning, interactive methods (cluster, brainstorming, INSERT, "B-B-B" table), analytical reading, reflection exercises, group work, and debates. In the control group, traditional teaching methods were used. Students' independent thinking skills (analysis, generalization, conclusion-making, and personal expression) were regularly measured.

Fourth, methods of data analysis were applied. The collected data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Statistical methods were used to compare results between experimental and control groups, determine dynamics of change, and evaluate the effectiveness of the methodology.

To ensure reliability, results were verified in several stages, and data obtained through different methods were compared. Ethical principles were also followed, participants' consent was obtained, and results were presented objectively. This methodology allowed a comprehensive study of the process of developing independent thinking through reading in primary school students and assessment of its effectiveness.

A total of 50 primary school students participated in the study, divided equally into experimental and control groups (25 each). According to initial diagnostic results, in the experimental group 16% (4 students) were at a high level, 48% (12 students) at an average level, and 36% (9 students) at a low level of independent thinking. In the control group, the corresponding figures were 12% (3 students), 52% (13 students), and 36% (9 students). These results showed that the majority of students in both groups were at average and low levels.

During the experiment, significant changes were observed in the experimental group due to the implementation of innovative pedagogical technologies. In the final results, the proportion of high-level students increased to 44% (11 students), showing a 28% increase compared to the initial 16%. The average level slightly decreased from 48% to 44%, while the low level decreased from 36% to 12%, showing a positive shift of 24%.

In the control group, changes were relatively minor. The proportion of high-level students increased from 12% to 20% (from 3 to 5 students), an 8% increase. The average level increased from 52% to 56% (from 13 to 14 students), while the low level decreased from 36% to 24% (from 9 to 6 students).

In addition, the average test scores for text analysis also changed significantly. In the experimental group, the score increased from 5.2 to 8.1 out of 10, an improvement of 2.9 points. In the control group, it increased from 5.4 to 6.3 points, an improvement of only 0.9 points. Overall, in the experimental group, high-level independent thinking increased approximately 2.7 times, while low-level indicators decreased threefold. Such significant changes were not observed in the control group. These statistical results clearly demonstrate that innovative pedagogical technologies based on reading are more effective than traditional methods in developing students' independent thinking skills.

The results of the study show that independent thinking skills in primary school students can be effectively developed through reading when supported by appropriate pedagogical technologies. Analysis of the results indicates that traditional teaching methods mainly develop reproductive learning activities, whereas innovative approaches enhance analytical and creative thinking.

The increase in high-level performance in the experimental group is explained by the development of students' skills in analyzing texts, drawing conclusions, and

expressing personal opinions. This confirms the necessity of organizing reading not only as reading texts but as a process of comprehension, evaluation, and transformation.

The results also show that interactive methods (such as brainstorming, clustering, and problem-based situations) increase student engagement and encourage independent thinking. Group discussions and debates, in particular, help students develop competencies such as expressing opinions freely, listening to others, and critical thinking.

The findings are consistent with other scientific studies, which also recognize reading as an important tool for developing thinking skills. Our research confirms these views, showing that proper organization of reading effectively develops students' independent thinking.

However, some challenges were identified during the study, such as low motivation to read among some students, difficulties in selecting books, and limited use of interactive methods by some teachers. This highlights the need to improve teachers' methodological skills and select more engaging reading materials.

In summary, pedagogical technologies based on reading are an important factor in developing students' independent thinking skills. Further improvement of this process requires strengthening individualized approaches, using modern information technologies, and expanding the reading environment. Future research should focus on comparative studies across age groups and the development of new pedagogical technologies.

This study comprehensively examined the development of independent thinking through reading in primary school students. The results show that properly organized reading not only improves knowledge but also activates thinking processes and significantly enhances analytical and conclusion-making abilities.

Experimental results confirm that innovative pedagogical technologies are more effective than traditional methods. Interactive methods, problem situations, analytical reading, and reflection exercises help students deeply process texts, express independent opinions, and justify their viewpoints. Statistical results also confirmed significant improvements in the experimental group.

Furthermore, students' interest in reading and intrinsic motivation increased during the study. This shows that reading should be considered not only as an academic activity but also as a tool for personal development. The developed independent thinking skills serve as an important foundation for future academic success and active social participation.

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were made: reading activities in primary education should be organized systematically and continuously; innovative pedagogical technologies should be widely implemented to develop independent

thinking; differentiated approaches should be used considering students’ individual characteristics; teachers’ methodological training should be improved; and cooperation between family and school should be strengthened to promote reading culture.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the technology of developing independent thinking through reading is an important factor in the intellectual and personal development of primary school students. Its wide implementation in educational practice not only improves academic performance but also helps form independent, creative, and critically thinking individuals.

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