

PHILOSOPHY TEACHING MECHANISMS FOR DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING COMPETENCIES

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Abstract: This article analyzes modern methodological mechanisms for developing students' critical thinking competencies in philosophy teaching. The study was conducted based on constructivism, socio-cultural approaches, reflective learning, and dialogic teaching concepts. Empirical and theoretical research helps identify effective pedagogical strategies for developing students' logical-analytical thinking, argumentation, and reflective competencies.

Keywords: philosophy education, critical thinking, pedagogical mechanisms, reflective learning, constructivism, socio-cultural approach.

Introduction

In the last decade, critical thinking has been considered a central competency in education for students' deep understanding of knowledge and independent reasoning (Facione, 2020) [1]. In philosophy, this competency is especially important because it shapes students' abilities in logical analysis, argumentation, and reflection (Paul & Elder, 2021)[2].

According to the constructivist approach, knowledge is not simply transmitted but is formed through students' active exploration and discussion processes (Fosnot, 2020) [3]. The socio-cultural approach emphasizes that the cognitive process develops through social interaction and collaboration (Vygotsky, 2021) [4]. Therefore, in philosophy teaching, mechanisms for developing students' critical thinking competencies are considered a central element of pedagogical design.

Methods

The study was conducted based on the integration of theoretical, pedagogical, and empirical approaches. The research relied on the following concepts and methodological approaches:

Constructivist learning theory (Fosnot, 2020) [3] – knowledge is formed through the student's active thinking. In philosophy, this approach is applied to develop critical thinking through problem-based questions, analytical texts, and argumentation exercises.

Socio-cultural approach (Vygotsky, 2021) [4] – the process of dialogue and collaboration among students is central for developing critical thinking. Group discussions, seminars, and case-study activities ensure that students exchange ideas through interaction.

Reflective and experiential learning model (Kolb, 2021) [5] – serves to consolidate knowledge through personal experience and reflection. In philosophy, essays, analytical writings, and discussions develop reflective thinking.

Dialogic teaching (Brookfield, 2020) [6] – the Socratic method and critical questioning shape students' competencies for independent reasoning.

The study was conducted using a quasi-experimental design. A total of 80 students were divided into the following groups:

Control group: philosophy was taught through traditional classroom lectures;

Experimental group: taught using modern methodological mechanisms (problem-based questions, reflective writing, seminar discussions).

Empirical data were collected using the following methods:

Surveys: students' attitudes toward the teaching method and critical thinking indicators;

Tests: assessment based on critical thinking indicators (analysis, argumentation, reflection);

Pedagogical observation: participation and activity during seminars and discussions;

Analysis of written work: students' logical-analytical and reflective competencies.

Results

The study showed that methodological mechanisms aimed at developing critical thinking competencies in philosophy teaching significantly enhanced students' logical-analytical thinking, argumentation, and reflective competencies.

A total of 80 students participated in the study: control group – 40, experimental group – 40. The groups' initial knowledge levels were almost equal, making the empirical results objective.

Students' critical thinking levels were assessed based on the following indicators: problem analysis, argumentation, independent reasoning, and reflective evaluation.

Indicator	Control Group (%)	Experimental Group (%)
Problem Analysis	55	78
Argumentation	52	75
Independent Reasoning	50	72
Reflective Evaluation	47	70

The results indicate that the experimental group's critical thinking indicators were on average 20–25% higher, confirming the effectiveness of constructivist and dialogic approaches (Fosnot, 2020[3]; Brookfield, 2020[6]).

Survey results showed that:

Students found it easier to reason through problem-based questions and reflective assignments – 80%;

Opportunities for independent reasoning increased – 82%;

Interest in philosophy grew – 76%;

Seminars and case-study activities were considered more effective – 70%.

These results demonstrate that modern pedagogical mechanisms support the development of students' active and reflective thinking (Kolb, 2021[5]; Facione, 2020[1]).

Discussion

The study results align with international and contemporary research. For example:

Garrison and Vaughan (2020)[7] emphasize that combining constructivist and socio-cultural approaches through blended online and traditional seminars significantly enhances critical thinking. Similarly, the results in the experimental group demonstrated an increase in critical thinking.

Paul and Elder (2021)[2] show that dialogic methods and reflective writing are effective in developing critical thinking, which was also confirmed in this study through essays and seminar activities in the experimental group.

Brookfield (2020)[6] advocates mechanisms for developing critical thinking through Socratic dialogue and problem-based questions. This approach proved effective in philosophy for improving independent reasoning and argumentation skills.

Additionally, contemporary pedagogical research indicates that reflective learning and experiential activities play a crucial role in reinforcing critical thinking (Kolb, 2021[5]; Fosnot, 2020[3]).

The results suggest that mechanisms for developing critical thinking competencies have the following characteristics:

Student-centered – students actively explore and form their own ideas independently;

Based on social interaction – group discussions and seminars facilitate the exchange of ideas;

Reflective and experiential – essays, written assignments, and case studies enable knowledge formation based on personal experience.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the development of critical thinking competencies in philosophy education is effectively achieved through integrative pedagogical mechanisms. Constructivist, socio-cultural, reflective, and dialogic approaches contribute to the development of students' logical-analytical, argumentative, and reflective competencies. In conclusion:

Developing critical thinking competencies should be a central pedagogical goal in philosophy education;

Pedagogical design mechanisms should integrate student activity, interaction, and reflection;

Contemporary pedagogical approaches enhance teaching effectiveness and foster students' independent thinking.

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