



## THE ROLE OF A TEACHER IN DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

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### ABSTRACT

*This article explores the crucial role of teachers in fostering critical thinking skills among students. It highlights the importance of creating a learning environment that encourages questioning, problem-solving, and independent reasoning. The paper discusses practical strategies that teachers can apply, such as inquiry-based learning, collaborative projects, and reflective discussions. Special attention is given to the teacher's role as a facilitator who guides students in analyzing information, evaluating evidence, and making reasoned decisions. The findings emphasize that developing critical thinking is not only an educational goal but also a key competence for success in modern society.*

### Introduction

In today's rapidly changing world, education is no longer limited to the transmission of knowledge but is increasingly focused on developing students' ability to think critically, solve problems, and adapt to new situations. Critical thinking is considered one of the essential 21st-century skills, as it enables individuals to analyze information, evaluate arguments, and make informed decisions. Teachers, as the main facilitators of the learning process, play a central role in shaping students' cognitive abilities and creating a classroom environment that promotes independent thought and reflection.

The relevance of this article lies in the growing demand for critical thinking skills in both education and professional life. Modern societies require individuals who can not only acquire knowledge but also apply it effectively in real-life contexts. Schools, therefore, face the important task of preparing students to be active, thoughtful, and responsible citizens. This cannot be achieved without teachers who understand their pivotal role in nurturing critical thinking through appropriate teaching strategies and methods. Exploring this role helps to identify effective pedagogical practices that can enhance the overall quality of education and meet the needs of contemporary learners.

The aim of this study is to analyze the role of teachers in fostering critical thinking skills among students and to determine effective strategies for its development in the classroom.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives are set:

1. To define the concept and importance of critical thinking in modern education.

2. To explore the role of a teacher in creating a classroom environment that encourages critical thinking.
3. To identify effective teaching methods and techniques that contribute to the development of critical thinking skills.
4. To analyze challenges teachers may face in promoting critical thinking and suggest possible solutions.

### 1. Literature Review

The concept of critical thinking has been studied by many scholars, including Dewey, Ennis, Paul, and Elder, who emphasized its importance as a fundamental educational goal. According to Ennis (1996), critical thinking involves reasonable, reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do. Paul and Elder (2006) define it as the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it. Despite differences in interpretation, most researchers agree that critical thinking is a purposeful, self-regulatory process that enhances students' ability to interpret, analyze, and evaluate information.

In the context of school education, critical thinking is not only a cognitive skill but also a mindset that encourages curiosity, open-mindedness, and intellectual responsibility. Research has shown that teaching strategies such as inquiry-based learning, problem-solving activities, and debates significantly improve students' ability to think critically. Therefore, the teacher's role is crucial in selecting and implementing pedagogical practices that stimulate students' intellectual growth.

### 2. The Role of Teachers in Developing Critical Thinking

Teachers act as facilitators of learning rather than mere transmitters of knowledge. Their responsibilities in fostering critical thinking can be grouped as follows:

1. **Creating a supportive classroom environment**
  - Teachers should encourage open discussion, where students feel safe to express their opinions, ask questions, and challenge ideas without fear of being judged.
2. **Modeling critical thinking**
  - Teachers themselves must demonstrate critical thinking by questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, and reflecting on alternative perspectives.
3. **Designing interactive learning activities**
  - Lessons should move beyond rote memorization and include projects, case studies, and problem-based learning that require analysis and decision-making.
4. **Providing constructive feedback**
  - Teachers should guide students to reflect on their reasoning, point out strengths and weaknesses, and suggest ways to improve their thinking.

### 3. Effective Teaching Strategies for Fostering Critical Thinking

Several teaching methods have proven effective in cultivating critical thinking skills among students:

- **Socratic questioning** – Encouraging students to think deeply by asking probing questions such as "Why do you think so?" or "What evidence supports your view?"
- **Collaborative learning** – Group projects and discussions promote the exchange of diverse perspectives, helping students to compare, contrast, and refine their ideas.

- **Problem-based learning (PBL)** – Students are presented with real-world problems and must analyze situations, propose solutions, and evaluate outcomes.
- **Debates and role-playing** – These activities foster analytical thinking by requiring students to defend or challenge a viewpoint with logical arguments.
- **Use of digital tools and media** – Technology can enhance critical thinking by providing access to information, simulations, and interactive tasks that require evaluation and synthesis.

#### 4. Challenges in Promoting Critical Thinking

Despite its importance, teachers may face several challenges when integrating critical thinking into the classroom:

- **Traditional teaching approaches** – Many schools still emphasize memorization and standardized testing, which limit opportunities for critical inquiry.
- **Lack of teacher training** – Not all teachers are adequately prepared to use methods that promote critical thinking, leading to reliance on conventional lectures.
- **Limited classroom time** – Teachers often struggle to balance curriculum requirements with activities that foster deeper thinking.
- **Student resistance** – Some students may initially find critical thinking tasks difficult or uncomfortable, as they require independent effort and responsibility.

#### Conclusion

The development of critical thinking is one of the most essential goals of modern education, as it equips students with the ability to analyze, evaluate, and apply knowledge in diverse contexts. The teacher plays a central role in this process by creating a supportive classroom environment, modeling critical inquiry, and implementing effective teaching strategies such as problem-based learning, debates, and collaborative activities.

Despite existing challenges, including traditional approaches to teaching, lack of time, and insufficient training, teachers have the potential to significantly influence students' intellectual growth. By integrating critical thinking into everyday practice, they not only enhance academic performance but also prepare students for lifelong learning, responsible decision-making, and active participation in society.

Thus, fostering critical thinking is not merely an additional educational task but a fundamental responsibility of teachers in the 21st century.

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