ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY OF CRITICAL THINKING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN FOREIGN AND NATIONAL RESEARCH

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Abstract. This thesis analyses how the problem of developing critical thinking in primary school students has been studied in foreign, CIS and national research. The approaches of R. Ennis, P. Facione and M. Lipman, the meta-analysis by P. Abrami and colleagues, the technology of developing critical thinking through reading and writing, and recent research by scholars of Uzbekistan are compared. The main directions of these studies are summarised in a comparative table, and promising directions for developing critical thinking in mother tongue and reading literacy lessons are outlined.

Keywords: critical thinking, primary education, primary school students, foreign research, national research, Philosophy for Children, reading and writing for critical thinking, mother tongue and reading literacy.

Developing critical thinking has become one of the central goals of primary education worldwide. In an environment saturated with information, even young learners need to distinguish facts from opinions, question claims, compare points of view and justify their own conclusions. In Uzbekistan, the Concept for the Development of the Public Education System until 2030 sets the task of introducing curricula and educational standards that place particular emphasis on developing critical thinking and the ability to search for and analyse information independently [1]. This makes it necessary to analyse how the problem of developing critical thinking in primary school has been studied in foreign and national research.

In foreign research, R. Ennis defined critical thinking as reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do [2]. The expert consensus coordinated by P. Facione (the Delphi Report) identified six core skills – interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation and self-regulation – together with dispositions such as inquisitiveness and open-mindedness [3]. These works provided a common definition of critical thinking and a basis for assessing it.

A key question for primary education is whether young children are capable of critical thinking. M. Lipman's Philosophy for Children programme showed that, through structured dialogue in a classroom "community of inquiry", children learn to ask questions, give reasons and evaluate arguments; Lipman understood critical thinking as thinking that facilitates judgment, relies on criteria, is self-correcting and is sensitive to context [4]. A large meta-analysis by P. Abrami and colleagues confirmed that critical thinking can be developed at all levels of education, the strongest effects being produced by opportunities for dialogue, exposure to authentic problems and examples, and mentoring [5].

In CIS pedagogy, the technology of developing critical thinking through reading and writing, adapted by I.O. Zagashev, S.I. Zair-Bek and I.V. Mushtavinskaya, became widespread. It structures the lesson in three phases – challenge, comprehension and reflection – and offers a set of text-based strategies (cluster, insert, cinquain and others) that are widely used in primary school [6].

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In Uzbekistan, research on the topic has intensified in recent years. G.R. Akramova improved the system of preparing students for social relations on the basis of developing critical thinking [7]. In our own research, a methodology for developing critical thinking skills of primary school students in mother tongue and reading lessons was substantiated and tested experimentally [8]. The main directions of the analysed studies are compared in Table 1.

Table 1. Main directions of research on critical thinking in primary school

Research direction	Representatives	Main focus	Contribution to primary education
Foreign research	R. Ennis, P. Facione, M. Lipman, P. Abrami	Definition and components of critical thinking; dialogue-based teaching; effectiveness of instructional strategies	Children can think critically through dialogue, authentic problems and mentoring
CIS research	I.O. Zagashev, S.I. Zair-Bek, I.V. Mushtavinskaya	Technology of developing critical thinking through reading and writing	Lesson structure "challenge – comprehension – reflection"; text-based strategies
National research	G.R. Akramova, M.A. Alimova	Theoretical and methodological foundations; preparation for social relations; mother tongue and reading lessons	Tasks and techniques adapted to Uzbek textbooks; experimental testing

The comparison shows that foreign research concentrates on defining critical thinking, identifying its component skills and testing instructional strategies on large samples; CIS research has contributed lesson structures and text-based strategies; national research has so far focused mainly on theoretical and methodological foundations. Mother tongue and reading literacy lessons in primary school, as well as criteria for diagnosing the level of critical thinking in younger schoolchildren, still require further study.

Thus, foreign and national studies share the view that critical thinking can and should be developed from primary school onwards. Promising directions for primary education in Uzbekistan include integrating international experience (dialogue-based Philosophy for Children, strategies of the reading and writing technology) with the content of national mother tongue and reading literacy textbooks; designing problem-based, comparative and analytical tasks and applying techniques such as RAFT and "5W+1H"; and defining clear criteria and levels for assessing critical thinking.

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