METHODS OF APPROACHING CRITICAL THINKING
IN YOUNG SCHOOLCHILDREN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE
OF VALIDATING KEY COMPETENCES

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The development of critical thinking skills has a crucial importance in education, research and student development at the age when the first skills of adopting an open mind are formed. Critical thinking is taking shape as a desire of current education, and its improvement represents an educational objective of major importance. Therefore, a restructuring of traditional teaching methods is required and the promotion of learning centered on the student, on his needs and on psycho-individual and age specificities. The change of vision implies a reorientation of the perspectives of instructional paradigms and a reformation of educational policies based on the valorization of key competencies.

Keywords: *key competences, critical thinking, young learners, cognitive skills, knowledge, skills, attitudes.*

MODALITĂȚI DE ABORDARE A GÂNDIRII CRITICE LA ȘCOLARII MICI DIN PERSPECTIVA VALORIFICĂRII COMPETENȚELOR-CHEIE

Dezvoltarea abilităților de gândire critică are o importanță crucială în educație, cercetare și dezvoltare a elevilor la vârsta la care se formează primele deprinderi de adoptare a unei mentalități deschise. Gândirea critică se conturează ca un deziderat al învățământului actual, iar îmbunătățirea acesteia reprezintă un obiectiv educațional de o importanță majoră. Se impune, așadar, o restructurare a metodelor didactice tradiționale și promovarea unei învățări centrate pe elev, pe nevoile acestuia și pe particularitățile psihoindividuale și de vârstă. Schimbarea de viziune presupune o reorientare a perspectivelor paradigmelor instrucționale și o reformare a politicilor educaționale pe baza valorificării competențelor-cheie.

Cuvinte-cheie: *competențe-cheie, gândire critică, școlari mici, abilități cognitive, cunoștințe, abilități, atitudini.*

Introduction

Based on the psycho-individual and age characteristics of the manifestation of critical thinking in young schoolchildren, the profile of the student's personality with potential in the development of this aspect is outlined by highlighting the characteristic features. The educational approach of the teaching staff to stimulate and develop this type of higher thinking must be based on a series of knowledge/ recognition of specific actions in order to organize the educational activity centered on the needs of the students and on the level of cognitive capacities.

Unlike traditional perspectives, the new approaches offer the student an active role, combating passivity in thinking, being at the same time a participant in his own training alongside the teacher, but also responsible in carrying out the learning process. The perspectives of identifying the child with manifestations of critical thinking, in broad terms, aim to recognize the capacity to assume deep involvement in the educational act through an effective organization of the personalized learning project, by building knowledge, assuming risks, awareness of the efforts that must be made, selecting appropriate learning strategies and correct time management.

The complex process of developing critical thinking in young schoolchildren has as its starting point the stimulation and valorization of the educated's intrinsic motivation and the desire to search, experiment, discover, investigate. Realizing the personality profile of the child with critical manifestations must start with the knowledge of this aspect: **motivational involvement.** Motivation is a necessary condition that must be met for an educational approach to cognitive stimulation with long-term results.

A complete approach to the process of stimulating and developing critical thinking in primary

education can be achieved based on the key competencies specified in the National Education Law. According to the European Commission, ,,key competences represent a transferable and multifunctional package of knowledge, skills (skills) and attitudes that all individuals need for fulfillment and personal development, for social inclusion and professional insertion. These must be developed until the completion of compulsory education and must act as a foundation for further learning as part of lifelong learning". According to this definition, the school is responsible for the training of students from the perspective of adaptation skills to a society in continuous change and the opportunity to learn at all stages of life.

The training of young schoolchildren from the perspective of the development of critical thinking can be related to the key competencies and represent orientational aspects that guide the teaching staff in the activity of designing curriculum contents. Thus, according to the recommendations, the 8 key competencies are identified (Council Recommendation on key competencies from the perspective of lifelong learning 2018/ C189/01) applicable to primary and secondary education:

- *Literacy competence;*
- *Competence in multilingualism;*
- *Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering;*
- *Digital competence;*
- *Personal, social and learning competence;*
- *Civic competence;*
- *Entrepreneurial competence;*
- *Cultural awareness and expression competence.*

On the basis of these key skills, the profile of the young schoolboy who has specific manifestations of critical thinking expressed in concrete terms through the ability to solve situations based on previous knowledge and skills is outlined. In the table below, the adaptation of the competences mentioned in primary education related to the theoretical level, the level of practical skills and the attitudinal level from the perspective of the critical thinking problem was achieved by creating a complete table that can guide the teaching staff in the correct assessment of children.

Table 1. Adaptation of children's previous skills in primary education related to the theoretical level, the level of practical skills and the attitudinal level from the perspective of the problem of critical thinking.

No. crt.	Key competence	Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
1.	*Literacy competence*	- analyze of literary and non-literary texts by highlighting the message conveyed by the author; - identifies the types of communication (oral and written); - represents and understands reality by using language; - synthesize knowledge and communicate it; - interprets personal concepts and beliefs and expresses them using oral or written language;	- adapts to the context of the communication situation; - identifies sources and uses them to clarify learning situations; - uses own resources in oral or written argumentation related to the context; - operates with information and restructures it according to situations; - evaluates information and uses it appropriately;	- manifests an open attitude towards a constructive dialogue; - identifies aesthetic qualities and appreciates them; - analyzes the impact of language in interaction with others; - identifies the positive aspects of language use with beneficial social effects;

2.	*Proficiency in multilingualism*	- identifies new terms and understands their meaning; - interprets messages using listening, reading, writing actions related to the specifics of the studied language; - carries out mediation and intercultural understanding actions; - integrates the types of communication in the foreign language in appropriate cultural and social contexts;	- understands oral messages transmitted; - initiates, sustains and ends a conversation in a foreign language; - has the ability to read, understand and write texts in foreign languages at different performance levels; - uses resources by learning the foreign language in a formal, informal and non-formal context;	- analyzes cultural diversity and appreciates it accordingly; - shows respect for individual linguistic interest; - appreciates social interactions with people who belong to minorities;
3.	*Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering*	- identifies the role of mathematics in everyday life; - uses mathematical language and terms; - selects the relevant information needed to solve mathematical problems; - justifies the choice of a method to solve the problem; - knows the basic principles of the surrounding world; - understands the scientific concepts and theories underlying the production of natural phenomena; - identifies the role of science and technology in human activity; - highlights and argues the role of scientific advances and relates them to the system of social and cultural values;	- applies mathematical principles in everyday life in different contexts; - argues the stages of mathematical reasoning; use logical schemes in mathematical demonstrations; - solves learning situations by communicating in mathematical language and by selecting appropriate resources;	- shows respect for mathematical truths; - expresses an attitude of respect and perseverance in the activity of finding solutions to mathematical problems and the surrounding world; - constantly evaluates the validity of arguments; - shows interest and motivation in applying mathematics in different learning contexts;
4.	*Digital competence*	- identifies the role of information society technologies; - use computer tools in different contexts; - identifies the forms and methods used to access information; - understands the role of innovations in the implementation of new technologies; - knows the information and how to use internet services;	- search, select and process information in order to process it; - has computer manipulation skills for the purpose of information; - uses digital technology for the purpose of social - inclusion and collaboration with others; - manipulates technology in order to achieve personal and commercial goals; manage and protect digital content and data;	- it has an ethical and responsible approach in the use of information technology; - manifests a critical attitude regarding digital technologies; - be aware of the social and economic impact of computer use; - expresses himself creatively/critically in solving learning tasks with the help of technology;

		- access, explore IT services to elucidate the educational dilemmas; - understands the opportunities and risks of the Internet and communication with the help of information technology;		
5.	*Personal, social competence and learning to learn*	- be aware of personal training needs; - identifies the necessary opportunities for personal development; - assimilates and processes new knowledge in order to guide and advise; - use previous knowledge and life experiences and apply them in different contexts; - applies learning strategies adapted to one's own person; - analyze the strengths and weaknesses of personal skills; - select education and training offers appropriate to the personal profile;	- exploits and assimilates knowledge and skills necessary for personal development; - effectively manage their own learning and school development; - shows persistence in learning by focusing on long periods of time; critically reflect on the object and purposes of learning; - shows autonomy in learning and self-discipline; evaluates personal work results and looks for improvement solutions;	- shows motivation and confidence in the success of learning; - supports own learning process by removing obstacles; - exploits learning opportunities by applying acquisitions in different life situations; - shows collaboration, social integrity and assertiveness; identifies and sets goals in order to develop resilience and confidence in learning success;
6.	*Civic competence*	- has knowledge about contemporary events; - critically analyzes the evolution of national and world history; - knows the basic concepts about the dynamics of social groups; - understand multicultural and socioeconomic dimensions;	- involves effectively in social issues by interacting with others based on common interests; - has the ability to formulate arguments through constructive participation in social actions;	- expresses interest in sustainable social development; - participates in the decision-making process at the institution and community level; - promotes an open attitude towards the private life of others;
7.	*Entrepreneurial competence*	- identifies contexts and opportunities for applying personal ideas; - understands the importance of involvement in projects with personal benefits; - becomes aware of the ethical principles of operation for the purpose of sustainable development;	- manifests critical and constructive reflection in innovative processes; - mobilizes human and material resources in order to support the entrepreneurial activity; - takes financial decisions by referring to costs; negotiate with others and communicate effectively;	- shows a spirit of initiative in the design of the entrepreneurial activity; - shows self-control and perseverance; - shows empathy and an ethical approach throughout the process; - values the ideas of others and motivates them;

Conclusions

The approach to the development process of critical thinking aims at three important aspects that guide teachers in the activity of enhancing the critical dimension of thinking: knowledge, specific skills and attitudes. Regarding ***knowledge***, it is known that critical thinking can only develop under the conditions of the existence of a rigorous theoretical foundation and against the background of contradictions between old and new information. Regarding specific **skills**, the importance of training students in the skills of using this information, restructuring and using it in different learning contexts is highlighted. ***The attitudinal aspect*** has an essential role in the educational approach of training and developing critical thinking, emphasizing the motivational side that represents the functional mechanism for its achievement.

References:

1. Council Recommendation on key competences from a lifelong learning perspective 2018/C189/01.

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