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Research Article

CRITICAL THINKING IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN SCHOOL AND FURTHER CAREER

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Yuldoshov Javohir Alisherovich

11 Th Grade Student Of Bukhara Presidential School, Bukhara 200100, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

Critical thinking is one of the most crucial skills not only in education but also throughout the life. Despite the fact that critical thinking has been studied by scientists and researchers for a long time, it has not still lost its relevance in the educational process. This paper focuses on the educational program of specialized schools in Uzbekistan, as an example Bukhara Presidential school. Like every regional ones, it has all conditions for gifted children acquiring knowledge from international qualified teachers along with well-equipped classrooms. Also, this paper has examined analyses of thinking-based approach in teaching – learning process and the outcome of the current methodology. As a result numerous students are becoming the winners of the international Olympiads, contests and get their further education at the top universities of the world. By identifying, selecting and training talented children, creating conditions for their comprehensive development, such schools also reveal the intellectual, scientific and creative potential of students. It is worth to note that, all 14 Presidential schools in the republic of Uzbekistan have the only aim: To prepare future leaders of the nation who can be competitive personnel capable of meeting world standards.

KEYWORDS

Critical thinking, Presidential schools, talented students, thinking-based learning, future leaders of Uzbek nation.

INTRODUCTION

All 14 Presidential Schools were established step by step on the basis of the decision PD-4199 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated February 20, 2019 “On measures for the establishment of presidential schools”.

The vision of the Presidential Schools is to prepare the next generation of leaders to actively and positively contribute to the development of Uzbekistan by providing educational opportunities that encourage the nation’s smart and talented youth to realize their

potential as creative, innovative participants in a dynamic global society.

The mission of the Presidential Schools (PS) is to enhance the educational experience for gifted students through a program of academic excellence and holistic learning opportunities to develop the leadership potential of its graduates to contribute to the future of Uzbekistan.

Initially in 2019, Presidential boarding schools were opened in Tashkent, Khiva, Nukus and Namangan, which was due to the need to test a completely new model for managing these institutions. Lately between 2020 and 2021 it was planned to build Presidential schools in all regions of Uzbekistan. In 2020, I had an honor to be a student of this school and that made a real positive change in my life. Let me share with my own experiences and impressions about the preparation to the exams and acceptance process to the Presidential school. The first stage of the test is solving mathematical tasks and problems based on critical thinking, in which 480 students are selected from among all participants. In the second round of the exam, 480 students (in each grade section) will compete in English, and among them, only 24 the smartest students will get the opportunity to study at this school. General secondary education, school uniform, personal net book and 5 times meal a day in Presidential schools are provided absolutely free of charge. Like all boarding schools, students live and study there on a fully packaged schedule. Based on the experience of Cambridge University, in cooperation with foreign experts conducted additional classes such as “Computer Science”, “Coding Club”, “Environmental Club”, “Theatre Arts”, “Visual & Performing Arts”, “Science Olympiads Club” and “Robotics”. Necessary conditions have been created for sports and art lovers, creative clubs such as

“Dance”, “Drama”, “Music”, “Art of public speaking”, “Chess”, “Swimming”, “Table tennis” and “Football” along with a green area for relaxation. These courses and clubs help to study STEAM sciences in-depth, learning foreign languages, mastering engineering and information technologies, developing innovative ideas and critical thinking. I would like to dwell on the term critical thinking since it is regularly cited as an essential twenty-first century skill, a key to success in school and work.

Critical thinking is essential in order not to believe fake news, draw false conclusions, and make decisions based on reason rather than emotion that it is can be deficiency for majority schoolchildren or even adults. From my own experience I can say that, during the preparation to the entrance tests hearing critical thinking, honestly I had no any idea about it as the secondary schools concentrate far too much on traditional subjects which do not adequately prepare students for the realistic demands of the modern working world.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

What is critical thinking? Most people who are uninformed about the gist of this term descant that critical thinking is looking critically at everything, thinking negatively about it, finding its flaws. But it is absolutely false. From early antiquity until now, many scientists, philosophers and psychologists around the world have been conducting their scientific research on critical thinking. To understand what critical thinking is, let's look at its general definition by famous scientists.

American philosopher and educator John Dewey, who is considered the founder of modern critical thinking, defines critical thinking as follows: “Active, persistent, careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of

knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends”.

According to Edward M. Glaser Critical thinking is the analysis of available facts, evidence, observations, and arguments in order to form a judgment by the application of rational, skeptical, and unbiased analyses and evaluation.

According to Robert Ennis, “Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.”

Simply put, critical thinking is the process or a set of skills as observing, analyzing, interpreting, reasoning, understanding and explaining things, questioning the possible outcomes of actions, evaluating, drawing conclusions, solving problems and making decisions.

Recently I have encountered a book “Critical Thinking” by Jonathan Haber an educational researcher, writer, and entrepreneur working in the fields of critical-thinking education. In this volume in the MIT Press Essential Knowledge series, Jonathan Haber explains how the concept of critical thinking emerged, how it has been defined, and how critical thinking skills can be taught and assessed. While reading, I realized that critical thinking get roots from ancient times. “Socrates, questioned fixed beliefs and strove to live an “examined life,” activities that earned him the title of father of Western philosophy as well as a death sentence from his annoyed fellow Athenians. Socrates left behind no written work, but others captured his insights, notably his student Plato, whose Dialogs present his master’s thinking intertwined with his own ideas. Plato also founded what is considered to be the

first school of philosophy in the Western world—the Academy—where philosophers such as the brilliant Aristotle studied”. It is worth noting that, while in western countries Greek philosophers launched this concept, in the East great scholars as Abu Nasr Farabi, Abu Rayhan Beruni, Abu Ali ibn Sina, Nasiruddin Tusi and Alisher Navoi were recorded the importance of thinking in the education of a perfect person in their invaluable writings. Ibn Sina highly appreciates the mental abilities, imagination and strong-willed qualities of a person. The power of thinking lies in the fact that it is possible to distinguish truth from lies by combining and abstracting from phenomena and events, and with the help of memory, perceived things and events are firmly stored in the human mind and help to distinguish one perceived object from another. He expresses the opinion that imagination is a reflection of objective reality in the human mind.

And that is the main reason why in our country, the education of talented students in specialized educational institutions named after their great ancestors as al- Khwarizmi, Mirzo Ulugbek, Ibn Sina encourages Uzbek youth to become a generation worthy of their ancestors, to become creators of the third renaissance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

So, why it is important to think critically? It is noted that people with high levels of critical thinking and a high level of IQ are less likely to experience unpleasant and negative events throughout their lives, both in their personal lives, in the learning process, and in professional activities. It is also true that critical thinking is a stronger predictor of life events than intelligence. There is ample evidence that critical thinking can be taught, so there is hope that teaching critical thinking skills can prevent negative life events

from occurring. Thus, critical thinking has become a key element of education around the world.

“Critical thinking is an active process that requires conscious action from us. By using the methods of critical thinking, we are able to analyze complex economic, social, ethical, legal or other various problems, understand their causes, consequences or influence on other phenomena and look for ways to solve the problem” says posts and videos on YouTube and Telegram channels of presidential schools. Therefore, even on the entrance exam, applicants are required to solve problems related to critical thinking based on logic. Later, after being admitted to study, during classes our international and local teachers guide us to think critically, encourage us to independent thinking, and give us real-life hands-on training, assignments consisting of upcoming tasks, problems and experiments. During science classes the students do experimental activities and conduct projects collaboratively, that helps them to comprehend the point of the task, to find out the solution of the problem. As an example, on physics I have made a pendulum with my teammates admittedly it was really fun and beneficial way of learning. We learned from our mistakes and work together to overcome challenges which created friendly atmosphere in class. In general, I understood that learning based on projects and problems improve students’ critical thinking skills. In the procedure of any lesson our teachers force us to analyze the problem before making decisions, to search alternative way of tackling it. One of my favorite classes at school is GP (Global Perspectives) which make us to think deeply while learning the modern world and everything related to it. These activities aimed at in-depth study of natural and concrete sciences, organize of mastering foreign languages, engineering and information technologies, and develops innovative ideas and

advancements of students and certainly these efforts are giving their results in international Olympiads, contests and competitions. Let’s look at the statistics.

According to statistics, in 2022–2023 academic year 100% of 326 11th-grade graduates of Presidential schools got international language proficiency (IELTS), 50% of them (168) got international mathematics and English language proficiency assessment (SAT) certificates.

Moreover, 281 graduates of presidential schools were early admitted to prestigious international universities and 51 of them had the opportunity to study on the basis of a full grant.

Gozalkhan Haydarova, a graduate of the Presidential School in Namangan, got the opportunity to study at “Harvard” and “Princeton” universities on the basis of a 100% grant. Jafar Arifjanov, a graduate of the Presidential School in Tashkent, became the first Uzbek student to win a grant from the top 10 California Institute of Technology. Nozimbek Turgunbayev, a graduate of the Presidential School in Jizzakh, won grants from more than 120 foreign universities in the amount of 6 million US dollars. Graduates of the Presidential School in Nukus, Asadbek Reimbergenov and Begdulla Tursinbayev, will study at Debretcen University in Hungary on a full grant basis. Sohijon Dilmurodov, a student of the Presidential School in Tashkent, won a silver medal at the 57th Mendeleev International Olympiad and a bronze medal at the World Chemistry Olympiad held in Switzerland.

A total of 12 graduates from Presidential schools in the cities of Jizzakh, Navoi, Fergana, Khiva, Termiz and Nukus became winners of the “El-Yurt Umid” scholarship.

CONCLUSION

As Albert Einstein –one of the greatest and most influential scientists of all time cited, Education is not the learning of facts but the training of the mind to think. Having completely agreed with this statement, I believe that the educational system of Presidential schools along with other specialized and secondary ones in Uzbekistan can yield big rewards. Due to new reforms in teaching methodology modern students not only can learn what they have are being taught, but also they can think critically that helps them to be successful both in a personal and professional lives.

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