

CRITICAL THINKING IN THE SYSTEM OF DEVELOPING CIVIC AND PATRIOTIC IDENTITY OF FEMALE STUDENTS

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Abstract: This article explores the role of critical thinking in shaping the civic and patriotic identity of female university students, particularly those studying in the field of humanities. Special attention is given to pedagogical strategies and conditions that foster analytical and reflective engagement with issues of culture, citizenship, and national identity. As part of a pedagogical experiment, methods such as case studies, discussions, project-based learning, and reflection were implemented to enhance students' ability to think critically and develop conscious patriotism. The findings demonstrate that integrating critical thinking into the educational process promotes greater civic responsibility, patriotic motivation, and personal maturity among future professionals.

Keywords: *critical thinking, patriotism, civic identity, female students, humanities education, project-based learning, pedagogical methods, personal development, conscious citizenship, Eastern languages*

1. Introduction

Today, the higher education system in Uzbekistan is undergoing a stage of profound transformations and dynamic development. Institutional reforms are being carried out aimed at close integration of education, science and innovation. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan promotes active updating of the material and technical base of universities, introduction of modern educational standards, including the credit-modular system and double degree programs in partnership with foreign universities. The Concept of Higher Education Development until 2030, adopted in 2019, defined strategic guidelines for improving the quality of training specialists, supporting scientific research and increasing the competitiveness of the country's human resources (1).

Development of innovations, support for gifted youth, expansion of international academic partnerships and interaction with employers are becoming the most important

conditions for sustainable progress of Uzbekistan in the context of the formation of a New Society.

Modern higher education today is considered not only as a source of academic knowledge, but also as a space for the formation of a mature, responsible and active personality. The development of patriotism as a multidimensional personal quality plays a special role in this. At the same time, the approach according to which patriotic feeling is not imposed from the outside as an ideologeme, but is formed through conscious reflection on one's own cultural and civic identity, understanding of one's duty to society and a sense of one's social responsibility is becoming increasingly important. In this context, critical thinking is considered not only as an intellectual skill, but also as a key tool for developing conscious patriotism. In her work "Education for Thinking" (4), Deanna Kuhn emphasizes the need to teach students critical thinking skills, which is the basis for the formation of conscious patriotism.

2. Theoretical and methodological foundations for the formation of modern patriotism

Critical thinking is a conscious process of analyzing and evaluating information aimed at formulating reasoned conclusions and making reasonable decisions. Modern researchers define it as a multi-level cognitive ability that ensures the intellectual autonomy of the individual. P. A. Facione describes it as a self-regulating judgment aimed at analyzing, interpreting and substantiating conclusions (3). R. H. Ennis associates it with a meaningful decision - what to do and what to believe (5).

The formation of critical thinking includes the development of skills in analysis, evaluation of sources, logical argumentation, reflection and independent decision-making. D. Halpern considers it as a creative and learning process that helps solve life and educational problems (6). In pedagogy, it is associated with reflection, in psychology - with self-regulation and metacognition (2), and in sociology and philosophy - with the ability to recognize manipulation and form an independent point of view. From this perspective, the development of critical thinking in female students is a particularly relevant task. It contributes not only to academic progress, but also to personal maturity, civic responsibility, and the ability to resist stereotypes. Paulo Freire saw education as an instrument of liberation through the awareness of social reality (9).

In the modern context, patriotism is understood not as emotional devotion, but as a conscious acceptance of civic responsibilities, respect for cultural diversity, and a willingness

to cooperate internationally while preserving national identity (8). In this context, educational approaches should be based on a critical understanding of identity and social role.

Fostering patriotism in girls, especially those studying oriental languages and cultures, plays a special role. Immersion in the traditions of other peoples requires an internal intellectual balance, where critical thinking helps to maintain a connection with one's own culture and consciously form a national identity (13). According to L. Green (10), the study of language, art, and gender contributes to a deep understanding of identity. The history of Uzbekistan knows many examples of women - keepers of cultural and spiritual values, such as Nodira and Uvaisi. This emphasizes that the development of patriotism in girls has deep historical and cultural roots and is relevant for the preparation of future generations.

3. Empirical research and teaching practice

In order to determine the level of critical thinking in female students majoring in philology, a survey was conducted based on the adapted methodology of L. Starkey (11). The study involved 3rd-4th year female students studying oriental languages.

The results showed that only 38% of the participants demonstrated a high level of critical thinking, which indicates the need for targeted pedagogical support. For this purpose, case study methods, discussions, project work and reflective assignments were introduced into the educational process.

As part of the pedagogical experiment, a system of active teaching methods aimed at developing critical thinking and forming conscious patriotism was implemented. The developed model was based on the integration of analytical, communicative, practice-oriented and reflective forms of activity united by a common methodological goal.

As part of the pedagogical experiment, an educational model was tested that included a system of complementary methods aimed at developing critical thinking and forming conscious patriotism in female students studying oriental languages. The model consisted of four key components:

1. Case Study: analysis of contradictions and decision-making

The method involved analyzing situations close to reality that required an analytical approach and reasoned choice.

Methodological goal: to develop the ability to analyze, identify alternative points of view and formulate one's own judgments.

Example: female students were offered a situation: the exclusion of national literature from the school curriculum in one of the eastern countries. The participants had to define the

problem, analyze the consequences, provide historical and cultural arguments and propose a solution.

The case method was used at the initial stage of the program to activate analytical thinking.

2. Discussion: forming a civic position through argumentation

The method was based on a structured exchange of opinions on current issues.

Methodological goal: to develop communication skills, the ability to argue and perceive alternative views.

Example: the topic "Is it possible to be a patriot and at the same time criticize your country?" was discussed in groups with different positions.

The discussion contributed to the transition from individual understanding to collective dialogue.

3. Project activity: integration of thinking and action

Students developed and implemented independent projects that combined research and practical activity.

Methodological goal: to combine knowledge, thinking and civic initiative.

Examples of projects:

- "Historical guide" (interactive map on the history of Uzbekistan);
 - "Infographics of the development of the Uzbek language";
 - "Scenario about heroism";
 - "Digital album of traditions";
 - "My contribution to the development of the country" (mini-projects on improvement, volunteering, etc.).
- Project activities became the central stage of the program, ensuring the practical application of critical thinking.

4. Reflection: understanding personal experience and values

The method consisted of systematic self-analysis of students.

Methodological goal: development of metacognitive abilities, formation of a conscious attitude to the material being studied.

Questions for reflection:

- What have I learned about my culture?
- How has my understanding of patriotism changed?
- What qualities do I intend to develop further?

Reflection concluded each day and the entire educational cycle, promoting personal understanding of the experience gained.

The use of a set of active teaching methods (case studies, discussions, project activities and reflection) made it possible to achieve the following results:

- students developed sustainable skills of critical analysis, understanding of cultural identity and development of civic responsibility;
- the educational process acquired personal significance and value orientation;
- a logical learning dynamic was ensured: from analysis (case) to dialogue (discussion) to action (project) to comprehension (reflection).

A comparative analysis of the results of pre- and post-experimental testing showed positive dynamics: the level of critical thinking increased by an average of 18–23%, which confirms the effectiveness of the applied pedagogical approaches and their contribution to the formation of conscious patriotism.

The most significant increase in the level of critical thinking was observed among female students who actively participated in project activities. Completing research and creative tasks contributed to:

- a deep understanding of national and cultural values;
- the development of the ability to independently analyze and make informed decisions;
- the manifestation of initiative, responsibility and a pronounced civic position.

The projects became an effective platform for the practical application of knowledge, the development of arguments and the evaluation of information, which directly affected the final results. Defending projects in the format of group discussions strengthened the skills of constructive dialogue, critical perception of alternative points of view and reasoned defense of a position.

Working with social cases allowed students to comprehend current issues related to identity, history, language and patriotism, as well as to draw intercultural parallels.

Reflective diaries filled out at the end of each stage contributed to the awareness of personal changes, rethinking the concepts of “Homeland”, “civic consciousness”, “responsibility” and the formation of a stable internal motivation for intellectual and spiritual development.

In addition, a decrease in the proportion of participants with a low level of critical thinking was noted, which indicates the inclusion of even weakly motivated students in the process. The transition of some students from the middle group to the high group indicates positive dynamics

and confirms that with targeted pedagogical support, students develop an internal readiness for personal and intellectual growth.

4. Conclusion

The results of the pedagogical experiment showed that the combination of case study methods, discussions, project activities and reflection is highly effective in developing critical thinking in female students of philological programs. The use of such approaches is especially relevant in the humanitarian sphere, where the formation of conscious patriotism is closely related to analytical thinking, the ability to cross-cultural comparison, understanding of values and responsible choice.

The most significant tool in this process was project activities implemented within the framework of a specially developed educational program. This training format combines research, group interaction, reflection and presentation, thereby contributing not only to the development of cognitive skills, but also to the formation of a sustainable civic position. The use of project-oriented technologies contributes to the development of key social and civic competencies in female students - the ability to work in a team, make decisions, critically analyze and constructively interact in society .

An integrated psychological and pedagogical approach to the formation of patriotism in female philology students in the context of modern Uzbekistan requires a systematic reliance on methods that stimulate critical thinking. This allows not only to assimilate patriotic values, but also to deeply comprehend them, to connect them with personal experience and real civic practice.

Thus, the development of critical thinking acts as a strategic direction for the formation of conscious patriotism and modern national identity among young people.

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