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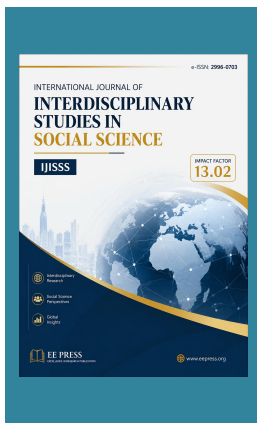
DEVELOPING STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT THINKING THROUGH THE CASE-METHOD APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of the case-method approach in developing students' independent thinking skills. In modern education, fostering learners' ability to analyze situations, make decisions, and think critically is considered a key objective. The case-method, as an interactive teaching strategy, provides real-life scenarios that encourage students to engage actively in problem-solving processes. The study highlights the effectiveness of this method in enhancing students' intellectual abilities, creativity, and decision-making skills.

Keywords: case-method, independent thinking, students, critical thinking, problem-solving, education, interactive learning

Introduction. In the era of rapid technological progress and global information exchange, the educational system faces new challenges that require innovative teaching approaches. Modern students must not only acquire knowledge but also develop the ability to think independently, evaluate complex situations, and make informed decisions. Therefore, the development of independent thinking has become a fundamental goal of contemporary education.

Independent thinking refers to the ability of students to analyze information critically, form their own opinions, and solve problems without relying entirely on external guidance. This skill is closely linked with intellectual development, creativity, and cognitive flexibility. In higher education, fostering independent thinking is essential for preparing students to face real-world challenges and professional responsibilities. [1,12]

One of the most effective methods for developing independent thinking is the case-method approach. This method involves presenting students with real or simulated situations that require analysis, discussion, and decision-making. By working with cases, students are encouraged to apply theoretical knowledge to practical problems, which enhances their understanding and promotes deeper learning.

Furthermore, the case-method creates a student-centered learning environment where learners actively participate in discussions, share ideas, and defend their viewpoints. This not only improves their analytical and reasoning skills but also develops communication and teamwork abilities. As a result, the case-method is widely recognized as a powerful tool for enhancing students' intellectual potential.

Literature review and methodology. The case-method approach has been widely studied in pedagogical research as an effective tool for developing independent and critical thinking. Scholars argue

that traditional lecture-based teaching methods often limit students' active participation, whereas case-based learning encourages deeper engagement and analytical thinking. Previous studies have shown that students involved in case-method activities demonstrate improved problem-solving skills and greater intellectual independence. [2.190]

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the impact of the case-method on students' independent thinking. The research is based on the analysis of scientific literature, educational practices, and existing case-based learning models.

The methodology includes several components. First, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify theoretical foundations and previous findings related to the case-method and independent thinking. This helped establish a conceptual framework for the study. [3.1]

Second, a comparative analysis was carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of the case-method in comparison with traditional teaching approaches. Various instructional strategies, including lectures, group discussions, and project-based learning, were analyzed to determine their impact on students' cognitive engagement. [4.30]

Third, observation methods were used to examine students' behavior and participation during case-based learning activities. This involved analyzing how students interpret case scenarios, propose solutions, and interact with peers during discussions.

Additionally, descriptive analysis was applied to interpret the collected data and present the results in a structured form. The qualitative nature of the research allows for a deeper understanding of how the case-method influences students' intellectual development and independent thinking skills. [5.40]

Discussion and Results. The results of the study indicate that the case-method approach significantly contributes to the development of students' independent thinking. Students who participate in case-based learning activities demonstrate higher levels of critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and decision-making abilities. One of the main findings is that the use of real-life scenarios motivates students to engage actively in the learning process. By analyzing complex situations, students learn to identify problems, evaluate alternatives, and make justified decisions. This process enhances their ability to think independently and apply knowledge in practical contexts. [6.33]

The study also shows that group discussions within the case-method framework promote collaborative learning while simultaneously strengthening individual thinking skills. Students are encouraged to express their ideas, challenge different viewpoints, and defend their arguments. This interactive environment fosters both intellectual growth and communication competence. [7.58]

Another important result is the improvement of students' creativity and flexibility in thinking. The open-ended nature of case problems allows multiple solutions, which encourages students to explore different perspectives and develop innovative approaches. As a result, students become more confident in their ability to handle uncertain and complex situations. [8.84]

However, the study also identifies certain challenges. Some students may initially find it difficult to adapt to the case-method due to a lack of experience in independent learning. Additionally, the effectiveness of the method depends on the teacher's ability to facilitate discussions and guide students without dominating the process. [9.145]

Overall, the findings confirm that the case-method is an effective pedagogical tool for enhancing independent thinking and intellectual potential. Its implementation in higher education can significantly improve the quality of learning and prepare students for real-world problem-solving.

Conclusion. The case-method approach plays a vital role in developing students' independent thinking and intellectual abilities. By engaging students in real-life problem-solving situations, this method encourages active participation, critical analysis, and decision-making.

The study concludes that integrating the case-method into the educational process can significantly enhance students' cognitive development and academic performance. It also helps students develop essential skills required for their future professional activities. [10.60]

Therefore, educational institutions should actively incorporate case-based learning strategies into their curricula. Future research may focus on developing more effective case designs and exploring their impact in different educational contexts.

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