

THE CONTENT OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' INFORMATION CULTURE BASED
ON A CRITICAL APPROACH

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Abstract. This article examines the role of a critical approach in developing information culture among higher education students, revealing its essence, content, and pedagogical potential. The mechanisms for forming students' information-handling competencies in the context of a digital society are analyzed. A didactic model of information culture based on a critical approach is proposed.

Keywords. Information culture, critical approach, media literacy, digital competence, information security, innovative educational technologies.

The processes of globalization and the rapid development of digital technologies pose new challenges to today's education system. In the digital environment, students face an enormous flow of information, various media materials, and fast-spreading, often unverified data from social networks on a daily basis. Under such conditions, the ability to search for information, evaluate its reliability, analyze it critically, and use it effectively becomes one of the key competencies of every student.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" adopted on September 23, 2020, the "Digital Uzbekistan — 2030" Strategy, and the Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System until 2030 define the formation of students' information culture as a priority task of modern education. Ensuring the effectiveness of this process requires the application of a critical approach in teaching and learning activities.

The formation of students' information culture is an integral part of the modern educational process. This process includes essential components such as searching for information, selecting and analyzing it, using it effectively, and ensuring information security. A student with a well-developed information culture can operate independently in the digital environment, conduct scientific research, use reliable sources in preparing presentations and written assignments, and work safely on the internet. One of the main components of information culture is digital literacy, which teaches students to use modern technologies correctly. Digital literacy implies not only technical skills but also the ability to apply technologies effectively in educational and research activities. For instance, students should develop skills in working with online libraries, scientific databases, electronic textbooks, and academic articles.

A critical approach is a methodological framework that activates students' thinking and fosters a conscious, analytical, and evidence-based attitude toward information. It constitutes the core content of information culture. This article scientifically analyzes the content of developing information culture based on a critical approach. The concept of information culture has been actively studied in global academic discourse since the late twentieth century. R. Paul and L. Elder associate information culture with an individual's ability to search for information, verify it,

process it, and draw justified conclusions. C. Bruce interprets information culture as a “culture of conscious interaction with information.”

In the works of Uzbek scholars such as B. Kodirov, N. Jo‘rayev, D. Xudoyberdiyeva, and M. Usmonxo‘jayev, the content of information culture is closely linked with media literacy, digital competencies, and information security. The theory of critical approach is based on the scientific views of J. Dewey, K. Popper, and R. Ennis. This approach helps determine criteria such as the value of information, transparency, and evidence-based validity. An analysis of the scientific literature shows that critical approach and information culture are closely interconnected, with each determining the quality and content of the other. However, a systematic implementation of this approach in higher education practice has not yet been fully established.

Today, information has become one of the most valuable resources in the world. The rapid development of information technologies requires every individual to possess the ability to work with information responsibly, evaluate it correctly, and disseminate it ethically. This process has led to the formation of the concept of “information culture.” Information culture is not merely the mastery of technologies but also the ethical and effective use of information.

Information culture represents a combination of an individual’s knowledge, skills, and values related to working with information. It includes searching for information, analyzing it, selecting relevant data, and applying a critical attitude toward it. The exponential growth of information flows makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish between accurate and false, useful and harmful information. Therefore, information culture encompasses not only technical knowledge but also ethical principles.

Information culture plays a significant role not only in personal development but also in social life. From the education system to professional activities, information culture is a crucial factor for success in all fields. The widespread use of the internet and social networks further increases the need to develop information culture. Fake news, cybersecurity threats, and conclusions based on misinformation pose serious risks to social stability.

Within the educational process, a critical approach is formed based on the following content components:

1. Logical thinking — understanding the relationships between information elements;
2. Analysis of evidence — assessing the reliability of information;
3. Recognition of alternative viewpoints — comparing contradictory information from different sources;
4. Identifying problems and developing solutions;
5. Drawing well-grounded conclusions.

Integrating a critical approach into student activities transforms learners from passive consumers of information into active subjects of the educational process.

In the modern world, success is determined not by merely possessing information, but by the ability to find it, analyze it, and use it correctly. Therefore, one of the most important tasks of the

education system is the effective formation of students' information competence. This competence represents a complex psycho-pedagogical construct that includes not only technical skills but also critical thinking, ethical responsibility, and a culturally appropriate attitude toward information.

Practical observations and scientific research indicate that many students experience difficulties navigating today's information flow. As digital resources increase, the need to filter information, distinguish between real and fake data, and use information purposefully becomes more urgent. This situation compels higher education institutions to seek new pedagogical approaches. From a pedagogical perspective, developing information competence requires organizing the learning process in an interactive, innovative, and student-centered manner. In this process, the teacher should act not merely as a transmitter of information, but as a guide, consultant, and facilitator of analytical thinking. Teaching methods such as project-based learning, gamification, and problem-based instruction play a crucial role in shaping students' independent approach to information.

Discussions reveal that students must be prepared to work with information not only technically, but also ethically and culturally. This necessitates the integration of values, social awareness, and responsibility into the educational process. Indeed, information is not merely knowledge; it is a social force, and the ability to manage it determines an individual's level of maturity.

Methods for forming information culture—such as interactive teaching, problem-based tasks, project-based learning, and the use of various information technologies—enable students not only to search for and analyze information, but also to present it effectively and communicate it to others. All of these contribute to the formation of modern information culture among students, enhance their professional competence, and broaden their overall knowledge. As a result, the development of information culture equips students with the ability to make successful and responsible decisions not only in academic activities but also in everyday life. This, in turn, provides a foundation for them to become responsible leaders who act ethically and professionally.

Developing students' information culture based on a critical approach is one of the most important tasks of modern higher education. The analysis shows that:

- a critical approach forms a conscious, justified, and analytical attitude toward information;
- information culture structurally includes media literacy, information security, and digital competencies;
- critical thinking methods enhance students' independent and active learning;
- the proposed didactic model supports the systematic development of information culture.

Thus, an educational process grounded in a critical approach enables students to acquire the skills necessary for successful participation in the modern information environment.

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