

## THE ROLE OF CREATIVE TASKS AND PROBLEM SITUATIONS IN TEACHING INDEPENDENT THINKING IN PRIMARY EDUCATION.

**Hamraqulova Xadichabonu Yoqubjon qizi**

Jizzakh State Pedagogical University

Faculty of Theory and Methods of Education and Upbringing (Primary Education)

2nd Year Master's Program

**Annotation:** This article examines the role of creative tasks and problem situations in developing independent thinking among primary school students. The study is based on classroom observations, teacher interviews, and analysis of teaching practices. Findings show that creative assignments—such as storytelling, open-ended questions, and project-based activities—stimulate imagination and originality, while problem situations encourage analytical reasoning, collaboration, and decision-making. Teachers reported that these methods increased motivation and self-confidence, even among lower-performing students. Despite some challenges in preparation and implementation, the integration of creative and problem-based learning approaches is proven to be an effective way to strengthen independent thinking and prepare students for future intellectual and social demands.

**Keywords:** Independent thinking; creative tasks; problem situations; primary education; critical thinking; problem-based learning; motivation; creativity.

### Introduction

In the modern educational system, the development of independent thinking among primary school students is considered one of the most important goals of teaching. Independent thinking is not only the ability to reproduce learned knowledge, but also the skill to analyze, evaluate, and apply knowledge in new and unfamiliar contexts [1]. For this purpose, teachers need to create learning environments that encourage creativity, problem-solving, and active participation of students.

Creative tasks, such as open-ended questions, storytelling, and project-based assignments, play a significant role in fostering learners' imagination and cognitive flexibility. These tasks stimulate curiosity, encourage divergent thinking, and allow students to generate original ideas beyond the boundaries of traditional rote learning [2]. Similarly, problem situations—real or hypothetical scenarios requiring logical reasoning and decision-making—help learners develop critical and analytical skills. When students are faced with challenging situations that do not have a single correct answer, they are encouraged to explore multiple solutions, justify their reasoning, and learn from trial and error [3].

In the context of primary education, where foundational cognitive and social skills are formed, the integration of creative tasks and problem situations ensures that learners become active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of knowledge. This approach also strengthens their motivation, autonomy, and self-confidence, which are essential qualities for lifelong learning [4].

Thus, the use of creative assignments and problem-based learning not only supports the intellectual growth of young learners but also prepares them to meet the demands of a rapidly changing, knowledge-based society.

## Methods

This study was conducted to investigate the role of creative tasks and problem situations in developing independent thinking skills among primary school students. A qualitative and descriptive research design was chosen, as it allows for a detailed understanding of how specific teaching strategies influence student learning and thinking processes. The participants of the study included primary school students aged 7–10 years, as well as teachers of native language and reading lessons, who play a central role in applying creative and problem-based approaches in the classroom.

Data for the study were collected through multiple sources, including classroom observations, teacher interviews, and analysis of teaching materials. During the observation process, special attention was given to the ways in which creative tasks such as storytelling, project-based assignments, and open-ended questions were incorporated into daily lessons. Additionally, the use of problem situations—such as real-life scenarios, hypothetical challenges, and case studies—was carefully examined to determine how they contributed to students' cognitive development.

The research procedure involved encouraging teachers to apply a set of predetermined creative and problem-based teaching methods over a six-week observation period. During this time, lessons were recorded and analyzed to identify the strategies that most effectively promoted independent thinking. Student responses were closely examined, particularly their ability to generate original ideas, apply logical reasoning, and engage actively in collaborative discussions. The observations also focused on how students approached unfamiliar problems and how they justified their reasoning in different contexts.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved categorizing student responses and teacher practices into key themes such as creativity, critical thinking, independence, and problem-solving. These themes were then compared with established pedagogical frameworks, including child-centered learning theories and problem-based learning models [1][2]. This analytical approach provided insights into both the effectiveness of creative tasks and problem situations, and the challenges teachers may encounter when implementing them in primary education.

## Results (with in-text references)

The findings of the study revealed that the systematic use of creative tasks and problem situations had a significant impact on the development of independent thinking among primary school students. Classroom observations showed that students who regularly engaged in creative assignments, such as storytelling, open-ended questions, and project-based tasks, demonstrated higher levels of imagination and originality compared to those who followed only traditional forms of instruction. Many students were able to produce unique ideas, express personal opinions, and apply their knowledge in non-standard contexts. This indicated that

creative tasks play an important role in encouraging divergent thinking and enhancing self-expression [4][7].

The introduction of problem situations also proved to be highly effective. When students were presented with real-life or hypothetical challenges, they actively participated in discussions, explored multiple solutions, and often collaborated with peers to justify their reasoning. Such tasks not only improved problem-solving skills but also nurtured analytical and critical thinking abilities [2][5].

Teacher interviews further supported these observations. Teachers noted that students became more motivated and confident when exposed to problem-based and creative learning activities. They emphasized that even students with lower academic performance showed greater interest and involvement when given opportunities to think independently and contribute ideas [6]. Additionally, the use of creative and problem-based approaches enhanced classroom dynamics by fostering cooperative learning, where students learned from one another through group discussions and shared experiences [3].

Analysis of teaching materials demonstrated that the integration of creative tasks and problem situations aligned well with the goals of primary education, particularly in promoting independent, reflective, and innovative learners. However, some challenges were also identified. Teachers pointed out that designing effective problem situations required considerable preparation time and pedagogical creativity. Moreover, some students initially struggled to adapt to tasks that did not have a single correct answer. Over time, however, most students showed improvement in their ability to approach open-ended problems and generate diverse solutions [1].

Overall, the results of the study confirmed that creative tasks and problem situations serve as powerful tools for cultivating independent thinking in primary school students. Their use not only develops cognitive and problem-solving skills but also increases motivation, self-confidence, and the capacity to engage in meaningful learning experiences [4][5][6].

## Discussion

The results of this study highlight that creative tasks and problem situations are essential tools for fostering independent thinking among primary school students. These findings are consistent with the theories of Vygotsky [1], who emphasized the importance of social interaction and problem-solving in cognitive development. When students are placed in problem situations that require them to analyze, evaluate, and make decisions, they actively construct knowledge rather than passively receiving information.

The use of creative assignments, such as storytelling and project-based learning, was shown to enhance imagination, originality, and self-expression [4]. This aligns with Dewey's perspective [2], which underlined the role of experience and active engagement in the learning process. By engaging in open-ended tasks, students not only developed divergent thinking but also gained confidence in expressing their own perspectives, which is a crucial component of independent learning.

Similarly, the findings support Bruner's [3] cultural-constructivist approach, which stresses the significance of discovery learning and active participation. When students are challenged with hypothetical or real-life problem situations, they develop critical and analytical skills, improve their reasoning abilities, and enhance their decision-making capacities [5]. This also reflects Bloom's taxonomy [7], which identifies problem-solving and evaluation as higher-order thinking skills essential for educational growth.

Teacher interviews revealed that creative and problem-based methods increased students' motivation and involvement, even among lower-performing students [6]. This demonstrates that such approaches not only build intellectual skills but also contribute to the emotional and social development of learners by promoting collaboration, discussion, and peer learning. However, challenges such as the need for additional preparation time and the difficulty some students initially faced when dealing with open-ended tasks suggest that teachers must be provided with adequate training and methodological support [4][6].

In summary, the discussion confirms that integrating creative tasks and problem situations into primary education is a highly effective pedagogical strategy. These methods not only develop students' independent and critical thinking but also prepare them for the demands of a rapidly changing educational environment where creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability are vital skills [1][2][5].

## Conclusion

The study demonstrated that the integration of creative tasks and problem situations into the teaching process plays a crucial role in fostering independent thinking among primary school students. Creative tasks encourage imagination, originality, and divergent thinking, while problem situations enhance students' analytical and critical skills. Together, these methods promote active learning, motivation, and self-confidence, helping students become reflective and independent learners. Although challenges such as preparation time and student adaptation to open-ended tasks remain, the benefits significantly outweigh the difficulties. Thus, incorporating creative and problem-based strategies into the curriculum is essential for nurturing 21st-century learners who are capable of independent thought, problem-solving, and innovation.

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