

Topic: Children should be taught on how to think and not what to think.

OUTLINE:

1- Introduction

Thesis Statement: The current educational emphasis on telling children what to think stifles critical thinking. Rooted in traditional methods, it limits creativity. The solution lies in transforming education to prioritize teaching how to think, fostering curiosity, and embracing diverse perspectives.

2- The contrast between teaching how to think and what to think.

3- Importance of developing thinking skills in children

a- Thinking nurtures creativity in children.

b- Children who think are the future leaders.

c- Developing adaptability through teaching how to think.

d- Fosters a sense of responsibility in

Children.

e- Empowering future generations with critical thinking skills.

f- Children with strong thinking skills are more competitive.

g- The development of thinking skills in children is essential for a country's long-term economic well-being.

4- Pitfalls of teaching what to think.

a- No innovation in children's thinking perspectives.

b- Lack of cognitive development.

c- Adherence to conformity hinders personal growth.

d- Reduced ability to critically evaluate information.

e- Lack of thinking skills promotes rote learning.

f- Lack of effective problem-solving skills.

g- Dependence on authority can hinder their self-reliance.

5- How to develop thinking skills in children.

a- Ask meaningful questions to evoke sound reasoning.

b- Rather than telling children absolute facts, provide them with challenges that force them to think. Phrase it properly

c- Interactive games with rewards may be excellent motivation for the development of thinking abilities.

6- Conclusion

In this timeless dance between wisdom and knowledge, an ancient tale echoes softly in the corridors of education. Much like the wise old fish teaching his offspring to swim freely in a vast ocean, the approach to teaching children should emphasize the art of swimming through ideas, not merely following a predetermined stream. Teaching children how to think nurtures creativity, adaptability, and competitiveness in them. Possessing thinking skills not only fosters a sense of responsibility in children but also equips them to be future leaders, empowering subsequent generations with their critical thinking abilities. Furthermore, children well-versed

in critical thinking are beneficial for the country's long-term economic growth. However, adhering to instructing children on what to think results in a lack of innovation, stunted cognitive development, and reduced problem solving skills. It also hinders children's personal growth, self-reliance, and ability to analyze information critically. To develop how children **should** think, ask them questions to evoke reasoning and provide diverse challenges allowing them to tackle situations independently. Additionally, offer reward-based interactive games to boost their motivation. The current educational emphasis on telling children what to think stifles critical thinking. Rooted in traditional methods, it limits creativity. The solution lies in transforming education to prioritize teaching how to think, fostering curiosity, and embracing diverse perspectives.

The difference between teaching how to think and what to think has lasting impacts on children. Learning how to think develops critical thinking skills and fosters a keen intellect. However, spoon-feeding children with pre-structured facts not only hinders their critical brain development but also affects their overall personality. Learning to think is similar to learning any other habit; it must be learned and then practiced. Both approaches are different yet interconnected.

Thinking nurtures creativity in children. Children have unlimited potential that must be polished in the early stages, as a rapidly growing brain is flexible and adaptable to change. Creative children seek non-traditional ways to explore the secrets of nature, resulting in the development of original ideas, innovation, and aesthetics in them. A researcher at the University of William

and many analyzed 300,000 Torrance Tests and concluded that the world is facing a 'creativity crisis' that needs to be addressed at its roots. Another report by IBM states that global executives consider creativity to be the most crucial leadership trait. Knowing this fact, creativity must be developed during childhood and will flourish with age. Creating a creative atmosphere for children during their formative years is critical, as a strong start will help them stay ahead of the learning curve.

Children who possess the ability to think creatively and critically become the future leaders of our world. As they say, 'leaders are not born, they are made.' They are made through hardwork, determination, and passion. All these traits do not come at once but are developed by rational minds as they grow. Children who are taught to

think rationally are more likely to possess these traits. Young minds with potential thinking skills develop problem-solving skills, adaptability, and originality. They are more aware of future dynamics and possess the ability to lead. These thinking children, with their inquisitive minds and a willingness to explore beyond conventional boundaries, hold the potential to shape the future.

Thinking develops adaptability in children. Children with open minds have potential to respond effectively to different scenarios and challenges. They learn to embrace changes, practice mindfulness, and try to come out of their comfort zone to face the situation. In her research of the latest developments in neuroscience, Madeline Levine, Ph.D, a psychologist, identifies that adaptability is one of the most important skill that children need to excel. Children that are more

adaptable tend to move smoothly from one activity to the next, they adjust more quickly to change. Children with this temperament seem to go with the flow and be more flexible. On the other hand, children who are less adaptable have a more difficult time coping with changes in routines and schedules.

Thinking minds develop a sense of responsibility from a very early age. When children are made responsible, without being dictated to or pampered, they tend to fulfill their duties. Encouraging them to complete tasks on their own is essential. Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development suggests that critical thinking skills play a pivotal role in shaping children's moral reasoning and sense of responsibility. Children exposed to environments that foster critical thinking skills demonstrate higher levels of responsibility in various aspects of their lives. This emphasizes

the crucial role of thinking skills in shaping a child's sense of responsibility, highlighting the need for educational strategies that prioritize cognitive development.

Nurturing critical thinking skills in today's children is vital to empower future generations. Critical thinking empowers individuals to make informed decisions, tackle complex challenges, and navigate an ever-changing world. In today's fast-paced and technology-rich world, critical thinking equips children to distinguish reliable sources from unreliable ones. In a survey conducted by Reboot Foundation (2018), about 95% of respondents say that critical thinking skills are necessary in today's world, and about 80% of respondents believe that young people lack to engage in critical thinking. Also, 20% of respondents say that critical thinking skills are best developed in early childhood. This concerning situation needs encouragement

of children to embrace critical thinking as a lifelong skill to enhance their personal growth, professional success, and ability to positively impact society. By cultivating critical thinking, thinkers of tomorrow are empowered to shape a brighter and more informed future.

Children with strong critical thinking skills display more competitiveness in various aspects of life. Thinking skills assist children to make sense of the world around them and learn how to communicate their ideas. The ability to analyze information, solve problems and think independently not only contributes academic success but also fosters adaptability in real-world scenarios. A research study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development revealed that children with advanced critical thinking skills displayed better decision-making abilities and were more

likely to pursue higher education and succeed in their chosen careers. In essence, critical thinking not only empower children academically but also equips them for future challenges, making them more competitive in a rapidly evolving world.

The development of thinking skills in children is essential for a country's long-term economic well-being. It plays a crucial role in developing human capital, a population's knowledge, skills, and abilities that contribute to economic growth. Also, a well-educated population is more likely to be productive and innovative, which can drive economic growth and development. According to World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report starting from 2015-2023, critical and creative thinking have yet again been identified as the top two most important skills for dealing with rapidly changing labour market landscape. Nations that prioritize

Fostering critical thinking skills in their education systems tend to experience higher rates of innovation and productivity, contributing significantly to economic growth. Therefore, investing in the intellectual development of children is not just an educational imperative but a strategic economic necessity for nations aiming to secure a prosperous future.

The failure to teach how to think results in lack of innovation in children. In today's dynamic world, the failure to foster critical thinking skills in children hampers innovation and stifles intellectual growth. Innovation is also crucial for economic growth and country's progress. A lack of emphasis on critical thinking is reflected in alarming statistics. According to Programme for International Student Assessment's (PISA) results, released by OECD (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development), a substantial number of students

Worldwide struggle with critical thinking skills tasks. This deficiency poses a threat to future innovation, as the ability to question and analyze info is pivotal for breakthroughs in various fields. Investing in teaching children how to think is not just an educational imperative but a catalyst for the innovation necessary for societal progress.

The absence of strong thinking skills education correlates with increased conformity hindering personal growth and limiting independent thought. Societal expectations often channel children towards traditional career paths, predominantly pushing them to become doctors or engineers. This emphasis on a narrow set of professions restricts the exploration of diverse interests and is a consequence of curtailed development of thinking skills. The most common statement to hear as a child in Pakistan, whenever questioned about future plans in front of

parents, would be, "Mera bacha bara ho ky doctor ya engineer bany ga", "my child will grow up to be a doctor or an engineer." The overemphasis on these professions has resulted in 31% of educated unemployed youth of Pakistan as per recent study of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE). The pervasive conformity in guiding children toward specific career choices not only hampers individual potential but also highlights the pressing need to prioritize the cultivation of robust thinking skills.

Fostering thinking skills in children is very critical for their cognitive development. Cognitive development encompasses many different skills developing at different rates along various trajectories toward unique developmental endpoints and interacting and integrating with

one another to produce complex behavior. The study conducted by Piaget reveals that cognitive development is not merely a passive absorption of information but an active process wherein children construct their understanding of the world. The lack of emphasis on teaching critical thinking impedes this construction process. Therefore, a comprehensive approach to education is imperative to ensure robust cognitive development in children.

Children with weak thinking skills find difficulty in the critical evaluation of information. Critical thinking, characterized by the ability to analyze, question, and evaluate information, is necessary in navigating the complexities of today's information-rich world. When children are not taught how to think critically, they struggle to discern reliable sources, identify biases, and distinguish between facts and opinions. A

research conducted by the American Educational Research Association (AERA) emphasizes that the ability to think critically is essential for navigating an information-rich society. A lack of emphasis on critical thinking in educational curricula can lead to a decline^{/reduced} capacity to assess information impartially. Neglecting to instill critical thinking in early education may not only hinder intellectual development but also impede the capacity of future generations to engage with and interpret information critically.

Lack of thinking skills push children toward rote learning. Rote learning is a well-established practice followed worldwide, where approaches to education and assessment are really just tests of memory. This type of learning stifles the growth and it doesn't usually build meaningful knowledge. This deteriorating condition is one of the biggest

reasons for the shortcomings in the Pakistani educational system. Among the 59% literate people of Pakistan, only a fraction of them can actually write on any given topic. As per report of Annual Status of Educational Report 2021, Pakistan has a learning poverty rate of 77%, which means that most of the kids cannot read and understand simple text by the time they are 10 years age. Children attending school and still remaining illiterate is more tragic than being out of school. Building children's foundational learning today is the need of the hour.

The failure to cultivate thinking skills in children poses a significant threat to the development of effective problem-solving skills. Problem-solving is a cognitive process that involves identifying, analysing, and finding effective solutions to challenges.

When children are not taught critical thinking in their early ages/years, it has a negative impact on their professional growth. It results in high rates of unemployment, as can be seen in the case of Pakistan.

The integration of evidence-based teaching methodologies that promote critical thinking is imperative to equip children with the skills necessary for effective problem-solving in the 21st century.

Lack of thinking skills result in dependence on authority that can hinder children's self-reliance. Fostering critical thinking skills in early education is significant to empower individuals to make informed and independent decisions. A child, who relies on authority or parents, believes that he cannot succeed alone. There is a need for educational reforms to prioritize critical thinking skills, as a lack thereof

Contributes to a dependence on authority figures. By neglecting the cultivation of thinking skills, societies risk hindering the self-reliance of its future generations, perpetuating a cycle of dependency on external guidance.

Thinking skills in children can be developed by asking meaningful questions that stimulate reasoning. Meaningful questions engage children in active cognitive processes, encouraging them to analyze, evaluate, and apply knowledge. Children should be encouraged to constantly ask questions like why, what, when, who, where, and how, that can help them make sense of a situation. In her book, "Mind in the Making: The seven essential life skills every child needs", author Ellen Galinsky explains that a child's natural curiosity helps lay the foundation for critical thinking. This sparks

a sense of engagement and active participation, transforming learning into a dynamic and interactive experience.

Fostering critical thinking skills in children goes beyond mere dissemination of facts; it involves engaging them in challenges that stimulate their cognitive abilities.

Rather than presenting absolute facts, teachers and parents can cultivate a dynamic learning environment that encourages inquiry and problem-solving. When children are confronted with challenges, they are prompted to analyze, strategize, and develop creative solutions. In the words of Einstein, "It's not that I'm so smart; it's just that I stick with problems longer."

This principle can be applied to children to encourage them to engage with and comprehend problems, fostering the potential for future brilliance.

In the modern world, a child cannot learn everything with chalk and talk. Interactive games with rewards serve as a powerful tool for nurturing the cognitive development of children. This method of education has been proven to be an effective way to engage students and help them retain information, leading to long-term knowledge retention. Puzzles and brain teasers are excellent tools for improving cognitive skills, including critical thinking. These activities challenge children to analyze information, make connections, and think creatively. Ultimately, these games with rewards contribute not only to the development of a child's cognitive process but also instill a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence, laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning and cognitive growth.

In a nutshell, nurturing child's

ability to think independently, is paramount in shaping resilient and insightful individuals. Critical thinking produces future leaders who empower the future generations and contribute to maintaining a stable national economy. Although education systems are currently struggling in instilling critical thinking skills in children, there is still room for guiding children towards a path that leads them to become critical thinkers, as taking the road less travelled can make all the difference. Guiding children towards self-discovery and encouraging curiosity creates a foundation for a society of open-minded, creative thinkers. As the famous saying goes, "Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." Similarly, instilling the art of reasoning and problem-solving empowers children to navigate the complexities of life with confidence.

Good

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