

DIDACTIC FOUNDATIONS OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' THINKING AND ANALYTICAL REASONING BASED ON HISTORICAL SOURCES

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Abstract: The article examines the issues of forming students' thinking and analytical reasoning in the process of working with historical sources. The critical approach to historical sources, methodology of their analysis, and pedagogical conditions for organizing students' independent research activities are substantiated. Practical ways of developing high-level cognitive skills through source criticism in modern history education are proposed. **Keywords:** historical source, critical thinking, analytical reasoning, source criticism, students, didactics, history education, research activity.

Introduction

In the modern higher education system, priority importance is given not to delivering ready-made knowledge, but rather to teaching students to think independently, critically evaluate information, and analyze problems. This task has particular significance in teaching history. History is not merely a collection of past events, but the art of understanding, interpreting, and evaluating these events from different perspectives. At this point, working with historical sources becomes one of the most effective means of forming high-level thinking skills in students. Referring to historical sources teaches students to distinguish between fact and opinion, evidence and assumption, objective and subjective. In the process of working directly with source texts, students acquire not only historical knowledge but also the methodology of how to obtain, verify, and evaluate it. However, in practice, historical sources are often used only to confirm facts, and their educational potential is not fully utilized. This problem arises for several reasons. First, many teachers themselves have not sufficiently mastered the methodology of source criticism. Second, there is excessive reliance on textbook texts and avoidance of introducing students to original sources. Third, students have poorly developed critical reading and analytical skills. Therefore, developing the scientific and methodological foundations for developing students' thinking and analytical reasoning based on historical sources remains an urgent task.

The concept of historical source and its types

By historical source, we understand any material or spiritual monument that provides information about the past and was created as a result of human activity. Source classification can vary, but the classical approach divides them into four major groups: written sources (documents, chronicles, letters, memoirs), material sources (archaeological finds, structures, tools), oral sources (folklore, legends, reminiscences), and visual sources (paintings, photographs, films). Written sources are most frequently used in history education because they are the richest source of information and provide students with direct access. However, regardless of the type of source, the methodological principles of working with it are the same: contextualizing the source (when, by whom, where, for what purpose was it created?), analyzing its content (what is it about, what information does it provide?), criticizing it (verifying its reliability), and placing it in historical context. When working with students, it is advisable to use sources of different levels.

At the initial stage, simple, clear, short sources are recommended. Subsequently, complex, contradictory sources that cover the same event from different perspectives are introduced. These contradictions, different interpretations, and inconsistent information encourage students to analyze deeply, ask questions, and search for evidence.

Source criticism – the foundation of analytical thinking

The most important stage of working with a historical source is source criticism. Source criticism is carried out in two directions: external criticism and internal criticism. External criticism is directed at the source itself and its origin: is the source an original or a copy? When and by whom was it written? Under what circumstances was it created? Who is the author and what purpose did they pursue? These questions are essential in assessing the source's reliability. Internal criticism is directed at the source's content and the accuracy of the information presented in it. In this process, answers are sought to several important questions: was the author a witness to the events or is he retelling information heard from others? How might his interests, beliefs, and social position have influenced the narrative? Are the data presented in the source confirmed by other sources, or are there contradictions? Teaching students source criticism is the most effective way to teach them critical thinking. They learn that every sentence in history textbooks can be questioned, verified, confirmed or rejected with evidence. This develops in them a sense of relativism, the ability to respect different points of view, and to abandon the notion of "one correct answer." Through source criticism, students understand that history is a process of reconstructing the past, and in this process, different interpretations, debates, and misunderstandings are natural phenomena. In practice, source criticism includes the following stages: carefully reading and understanding the source; identifying main facts, ideas, and arguments; determining the author's position, purpose, and subjectivity; comparing information in the source with other sources and historical context; assessing the source's reliability and drawing conclusions. At each stage, the student performs certain cognitive operations: analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and generalization.

Didactic conditions for developing analytical thinking in students

To effectively develop students' analytical thinking based on historical sources, a number of pedagogical conditions must be ensured. The first and most important condition is the accessibility and clarity of sources. Sources should be easily available to students in physical or electronic form, their language should be comprehensible (with explanations provided when necessary). When selecting sources, students' age, level of preparation, and interests must be taken into account. The second important condition is the principle of gradual complexity. Initially, students begin by analyzing one source, then gradually move to comparing several sources, identifying contradictions among them, and evaluating different points of view. For example, if first-year students analyze one historical document, by the fourth year they can compare 5-7 different sources and solve complex historical problems. The third condition is creating an environment of questions and discussion. The teacher must teach students to ask questions, express their opinions, and respect others' views. In class, the environment should value not finding the "correct answer" but asking "interesting questions." When working with sources, it is important to move from "what?" questions to "why?", "how?", and "why exactly so?" questions. The fourth condition is organizing written work. Oral discussion is important, but written analysis forces students to express their thoughts more precisely, present arguments systematically, and substantiate conclusions. These can be essays, analytical reports, comparison tables, or written source critiques. Written work gives students the opportunity to reflect on their own thinking process. The fifth condition is for the teacher to be a model. If the teacher only provides ready-made conclusions in class, students will do the same. If the teacher demonstrates the process of analyzing a source, thinks aloud, and models asking questions, students will

follow this path. The teacher's ability to say "I don't know for sure either, let's think about it together" is a very valuable model for students.

Practical methods and approaches

There are several effective methods for working with historical sources. The "interrogating the source" method involves students addressing the source as a person, asking it questions as if it were a living witness. This method brings the source to life and increases students' interest. For example, after reading a source about the invasion of Central Asia, students can ask questions like "Where were you at that time?", "What did you see?", "What did you feel?" The "historical trial" method involves students conducting a role-play of "judging" a historical event or figure. One group is the prosecution, another group is the defense, and a third is the jury. Each side substantiates its position with various historical sources. This method teaches students to understand different points of view, search for arguments, and select convincing evidence. The "comparing sources" method involves providing 2-3 sources that cover the same event from different perspectives. Students read them, identify similarities and differences, try to understand each author's position, and conclude which is more reliable. For example, sources about the Timur period written in Central Asia and in Europe can be compared. The "hidden source" method involves providing students with a source whose author, date, and place of writing are unknown. They try to determine this information by analyzing the text content. This detective-like work develops students' attention, logical thinking, and deductive abilities. The "historical project" method involves students researching a specific historical problem in groups or individually. They search for, analyze, and draw conclusions from various sources themselves, presenting results in a presentation, essay, or other format. This method develops independent research activity and information search and processing skills. The "source reconstruction" method involves students attempting to "restore" a damaged, partially preserved, or partially lost source. Based on the existing parts, they hypothesize about the missing part and logically reconstruct it based on the context of that era. This creative task develops students' historical empathy, imagination, and logical reasoning abilities.

Conclusion

Developing students' thinking and analytical reasoning based on historical sources is a multifaceted, complex, but highly effective pedagogical process. This process not only deepens historical knowledge but also teaches students skills necessary in life generally – critical thinking, information evaluation, evidence-based reasoning, and understanding different perspectives. However, achieving this result requires meeting a number of conditions: availability and accessibility of sources, gradual complexity, an open and supportive learning environment, use of various active methods, high teacher qualification, and the teacher being a role model. When these conditions are met, working with historical sources becomes not only interesting and meaningful for students but also a powerful tool for personal and intellectual growth. Future research should develop more precise methodologies for working with historical sources, study the specifics of working with different types of sources (visual, oral, digital), and create precise criteria for assessing the development of analytical thinking in students. Additionally, there are broad prospects for enriching source criticism methodology using modern digital technologies (digital archives, interactive platforms, online collaboration tools).

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