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PEDAGOGICAL POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL PROJECT TECHNOLOGIES IN DEVELOPING CREATIVE THINKING OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract: This article examines the role of social project-based learning technologies in developing the creative competence of students in higher education institutions. The study analyzes the theoretical foundations of project-based learning and its impact on the development of students' creative thinking, problem-solving abilities, and collaboration skills. The work is based on constructivist and competence-based approaches to learning, drawing on the works of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky. It also considers the international approaches of UNESCO and the OECD toward innovative and student-centered teaching methods. The results show that social project technologies significantly increase such indicators of creative thinking as fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Overall, it is concluded that project-based learning is an effective pedagogical tool for developing 21st-century competencies in higher education.

Keywords: social project technologies, creative competence, higher education, pedagogical technologies, constructivism, competence-based approach, creativity development, student-centered learning, critical thinking, collaboration skills.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization, one of the most critical tasks of the higher education system is not only providing students with theoretical knowledge but also developing their creative thinking, problem-solving abilities, and innovative capacity. According to World Economic Forum reports, creativity, critical thinking, and complex problem-solving will become the most sought-after skills [1]. This significantly increases the necessity of integrating new pedagogical technologies into the educational process.

Among modern pedagogical approaches, social project technologies hold a special place. They are aimed at engaging students in identifying, analyzing, and solving real-world social problems. Research indicates that under project-based learning conditions, student engagement increases by 30–40%, and the quality of knowledge retention is significantly higher compared to traditional teaching methods [2].

Social project technologies foster the development of skills such as teamwork, leadership, communicative competence, and creative thinking. According to UNESCO, the utilization of interactive teaching methods increases student autonomy by up to 25% [3].

The relevance of this topic is driven by educational system reforms in the Republic of Uzbekistan aimed at implementing innovative technologies and training competitive specialists. The Law "On Education" and strategic documents emphasize the vital importance of developing student competencies [4].

The purpose of this study is to reveal the essence of social project technologies and determine their role in developing the creative competence of students in higher education institutions.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a comprehensive scientific approach based on a combination of theoretical and empirical methods.

The theoretical foundation included project-based learning, constructivist, and competence-based approaches. The ideas of John Dewey and Jean Piaget were utilized, as well as the research of William Heard Kilpatrick and Thomas Markham [5].

The empirical methods included:

- pedagogical observation;
- questionnaires;
- testing;
- pedagogical experiment;
- statistical data analysis.

The study involved more than 100 university students in Uzbekistan, divided into control and experimental groups.

The program included the following stages:

- identification and analysis of the problem;
- development of project ideas;
- planning;
- project implementation;
- evaluation of results.

To assess creative abilities, E.P. Torrance's criteria were used [6]: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

RESULTS

The expected results of the study show that students in the experimental group demonstrate a higher level of creative thinking compared to the control group.

An increase was observed in:

- idea fluency;
- cognitive flexibility;
- originality;
- ability to elaborate and detail ideas.

Improvements were also noted in communication skills, teamwork, and critical thinking.

Overall, social project-based technologies contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the educational process and the development of students' creative competence.

DISCUSSION

The obtained results confirm that project-based learning contributes to the transition of students from passive knowledge acquisition to active participation in the educational process.

From a theoretical perspective, this can be explained by the concept of experiential learning developed by John Dewey, the theory of cognitive development proposed by Jean Piaget, and the theory of social constructivism by Lev Vygotsky.

The model of creative thinking by E.P. Torrance also supports the effectiveness of developing such indicators as fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

In the context of higher education in Uzbekistan, the implementation of project-based technologies aligns with the strategic directions of educational modernization.

International organizations such as UNESCO and OECD also confirm the effectiveness of interactive teaching methods in developing 21st-century skills.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that social project-based technologies play an important role in the development of students' creative competence.

Project-based learning contributes to the development of independence, critical thinking, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities.

The theoretical analysis confirms the significance of the ideas of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and E.P. Torrance.

Thus, the implementation of social project-based technologies in higher education represents an effective direction for the modernization of the educational process.

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