

Date: 23rd August-2026

**DEVELOPING MEDIA LITERACY AND CRITICAL THINKING IN STUDENTS
WITHIN THE PROCESS OF MODERN UPBRINGING**

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Annotation: This article examines the importance of developing media literacy and critical thinking among students in the context of modern upbringing. It focuses on students' ability to analyze information, identify misinformation, evaluate media sources, and make independent and informed decisions. The study emphasizes the role of educational institutions and teachers in developing responsible digital behaviour, analytical skills, and active citizenship. The findings suggest that integrating media literacy and critical-thinking activities into the upbringing process can help students become more responsible, independent, and digitally competent individuals.

Keywords: media literacy, critical thinking, modern upbringing, students, digital education, information literacy, media, education.

In the contemporary digital era, the rapid development of information and communication technologies has significantly transformed the educational and social environment in which young people develop. Students are exposed to a constantly increasing volume of information through social networks, online platforms, digital media, blogs, video content, and other communication channels. Although access to diverse information provides important opportunities for education and personal development, it also creates challenges related to misinformation, manipulation, biased content, stereotypes, and unreliable sources. Therefore, developing students' media literacy and critical thinking has become an essential component of modern upbringing and education. Media literacy enables students to access, understand, analyze, evaluate, and create media content responsibly. It helps learners distinguish reliable information from misleading or false information, recognize the purposes and techniques of media messages, and understand how digital content can influence individual attitudes and behaviour. In this context, media literacy should not be considered merely as the ability to use digital technologies. It also involves the development of analytical, evaluative, ethical, and communicative competencies that allow students to participate consciously and responsibly in the modern information society.

Critical thinking is closely connected with media literacy. Students who possess well-developed critical thinking skills are better able to question assumptions, compare different perspectives, identify logical inconsistencies, evaluate evidence, and formulate independent conclusions. These skills are particularly important in the context of modern upbringing because young people increasingly encounter information that may be emotionally persuasive but factually inaccurate. Developing the ability to critically



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examine information can therefore contribute to students' intellectual independence, responsible decision-making, and resistance to manipulation. The process of modern upbringing should consequently extend beyond the transmission of knowledge and moral values. It should prepare students to function effectively in a complex digital environment and to become responsible participants in society. Educational institutions, teachers, parents, and youth organizations all have an important role in creating conditions in which students can develop responsible digital behaviour, respect different viewpoints, verify information, and use media resources constructively. UNESCO emphasizes that media and information literacy is important for enabling individuals to critically engage with information and digital technologies and to participate meaningfully in society.

Thus, the development of media literacy and critical thinking should be regarded as an integral part of contemporary educational and upbringing processes. Their systematic development can help students become more independent learners, responsible media users, and active members of society. This study focuses on the importance of integrating media literacy and critical-thinking development into modern upbringing and explores effective pedagogical approaches for preparing students to navigate the increasingly complex information environment.

The development of media literacy and critical thinking is an essential component of modern upbringing and education. In an environment characterized by the rapid expansion of digital technologies and information resources, students need not only access to information but also the ability to critically evaluate, analyze, and use it responsibly. Media literacy helps students identify reliable and unreliable sources, recognize misinformation and manipulation, and understand the influence of media on individual opinions and behaviour. At the same time, critical thinking enables students to question information, compare different viewpoints, evaluate evidence, identify logical inconsistencies, and formulate independent conclusions. The combination of these competencies contributes to students' intellectual independence, responsible decision-making, and active participation in society. Therefore, educational institutions should systematically integrate media literacy and critical-thinking activities into the upbringing process. Teachers should create learning environments that encourage discussion, analysis, problem-solving, source verification, and independent reflection. Cooperation between educational institutions, families, and society is also important for developing responsible digital behaviour among young people.

Ultimately, strengthening media literacy and critical thinking can prepare students to navigate the modern information environment confidently, responsibly, and consciously. These competencies not only improve educational outcomes but also contribute to the formation of socially responsible, intellectually independent, and digitally competent individuals capable of making informed decisions in contemporary society.

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