

## FACT-CHECKING AS A MEANS OF STUDENTS CRITICAL THINKING DEVELOPMENT

In our time, the age of a global revolution, challenges of modernity demand new adaptations and a unique educational paradigm. Our prosperity requires real progress, a revolution in education, because traditional methods of education and outdated teaching model have not been meeting modern requirements for a long time already.

The four-dimensional UNICEF model highlights 12 basic life skills, one of which is critical thinking [1], which in turn is one of foundations of "soft-skills" - non-cognitive skills that have become a driving force in today's world. These include personality traits and communication skills that are necessary for success in careers. They characterize how a person interacts in their relationships with others [4]. Attention to critical thinking benefits has been formed since ancient times. The method of Socrates [2], a methodology named after the Greek philosopher, is one of the oldest tools for teaching this skill. Centuries later, the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius emphasized in his meditations: "All we hear is a thought, not a fact; all we see is perspective, not truth." [3] Currently, critical thinking is a basic academic skill that teaches to question one's own knowledge and information. It is essential for those who work on tasks and do research. Critical thinking contributes to success at all stages of their careers.

Fact-checking is a process of doubtful facts and statements verification. It used to be applied only by journalists to analyze politicians and public figures speeches and claims. Nowadays, this investigation method has become more widespread among commons, often when there is a need to check truthfulness of a certain media publication [6]. Fact-checking is an integral component of a critical thinking process, which reflects an ability to distinguish reliable facts from unreliable ones and evaluate events [16].

At present, Ukraine has not developed comprehensive characteristics on fact-checking and critical thinking concepts combining. In addition, a sufficient theoretical substantiation of a fact-checking role in students critical thinking development has not yet been developed, which causes **relevance of this study**.

**The aim of this study** is to acquaint students and academicians with a fact-checking concept and its interconnection with critical thinking. This research will give impetus to a realization of importance of "soft-skills" development in future professionals and, research and teaching staff.

Fact-checking, as a practical activity, is not yet a full-fledged object of scientific research in our country, and a small number of publications are devoted to it. In particular, a close connection of fact-checking media resources with a population critical thinking formation was substantiated [7]; problems of information security, ways to overcome it were studied [8]; history of information confrontations methodology origin and development, changes in information space in a process of information confrontation are also under Ukrainian scholars research [9]. A large number of researches are devoted to fake facts manipulation study [10, 11, 12].

With a transformation of values, globalization, information and technological adaptability, fake news is highly developing, so the verification of facts has become very relevant. Unlike many European countries and the USA, where such platforms as Snopes.com, Factcheck.org [5], InsideClimateNews have been created, with a help of which it is possible to distinguish fake information from reliable one, in Ukraine there are no professional resources to verify statements and news, as well as not yet explored complex characteristics of fact-checking concept, its specifics, ways of integration into educational process. I believe that fact-checking would be an effective way for mastering and developing students' critical thinking.

Currently, fact-checking is a successful tool in a fight against information and political manipulations, which are spreading at every step at a frantic pace [13]. It is becoming clear that teaching fact-checking as a minor discipline in every higher education institutions is an inevitable and mandatory process. With an appropriate lecturer support, a student shall learn to give an objective assessment of each source of information in order to determine the reliability before referring to it. Before using statistics, citations, or research to support their arguments in a discussion or task, students must carefully verify their truth by finding evidence that does not suffer from bias. In this way, through careful monitoring by a lecturer and student's persistent work, critical thinking will develop qualitatively. Specialists who are fluent in «soft-skills» are the basis of modern successful life in a welfare country. Such skills are extremely important for everyone's well-being, as they help to identify and assess factors that affect behavior and mood. Critical thinking does not allow us to fall victims to manipulation, protects against negative influences and radicalization, it is necessary for a person throughout their life. It can be formed and developed at any age.

In order to promote critical thinking development, a lecturer must:

1. have necessary knowledge base, with which he can support students when they are more immersed in a content;
2. be open to new challenges of students, not presenting themselves as only source of knowledge;
3. encourage students to see the big picture by questioning and challenging existing beliefs and practices;
4. to structure pairs so that students have an opportunity to cooperate qualitatively and develop creative forms of joint responsibility;
5. encourage critical action and reflection; teach to transfer processed cases in a situation outside a university [14].

In my opinion, with a help of critical thinking, a person can reach the top of the Maslow pyramid [15]. A post-industrial world needs highly qualified specialists who not only memorize information, but also know how to analyze it, draw conclusions, and find a way to solve global problems. In addition, critical thinking is crucial for economics, it helps to solve and anticipate new economic challenges and social risks. Today, people who are able to think critically are the basis of educated citizenship and democracy, as they are able to see a world's clear picture, omitting propaganda and manipulation. In the educational process, this skill forms an independent person who is not afraid to make decisions, take responsibility, forming their own thoughts. As a result, it will lead to significant changes not only in education but also in other fields of state policy. With a help of critical thinking, students, leaving the university, will become a broad and adventurous thinkers, able to plan their time, think strategically,

generate their own innovative solutions to various problems, be able to challenge modernity to overcome global catastrophes and inequalities.

**Conclusions.** Thus, critical thinking has been, is and is going to be an important component of a successful life. Socrates and Marcus Aurelius paid great attention to it in their guidelines, and in the 21st century, UNICEF puts it on a par with 11 other life skills. In addition, our future world will be tightly connected with mental creativity, which is developed through critical thinking. Verification of facts is a part of this process, which reflects an ability to distinguish reliable facts from unreliable and assess certain turns of events. Thus, fact-checking can be a tool for mastering and qualitatively developing critical thinking in students. With a lecturer's proper support, a student must learn to give an objective assessment of each information source in order to determine its reliability before referring to it. In order to promote critical thinking, an educator must have a knowledge base behind which he can support students as they delve deeper into a content, be open to new challenges, encourage students to see the big picture. Fact-checking, with new methods of teaching and proper justification of specifics, is going to become an effective means of students critical thinking development.

**Prospects for further research** are the development of a new critical thinking development methodology based on fact-checking technologies, identifying possibility of its implementation in an educational process. It would be able to achieve, by establishing an essence and theoretical substantiation of concepts, developing complex characteristics about fact-checking and critical thinking specifics; experimentally identifying disadvantages, advantages and prospects of such interaction. These steps will help to understand effectiveness of a new methodology, as well as a means of its implementation.

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