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Impact of Problem-Based Learning on Encouraging Critical Thinking of Students in Higher Education

Extended summary

The age in we live in is characterized by rapid and abrupt changes in all social fields. Such a society requires from the individual an active ability to think and filter information. These changes have had an impact on the field of higher education, contributing to the redefinition of the goals and learning outcomes in higher education. In the period of higher education reforms, it is important to consider the development of students' critical thinking. This paper focuses on the analysis of appropriate forms of encouraging students' critical thinking in higher education, especially on the role of problem-based learning. The aim of this paper is to consider the effects of problem-based learning on encouraging the critical thinking of students in higher education.

At the beginning of the paper the authors present terminological definitions of the concepts of critical thinking and problem-based learning in order to shed light on their connection in the context of higher education. In addition, an insight into the topicality and implementation of the concept of critical thinking and problem-based learning in higher education is given in order to clarify their position in the process of higher education. Below are the findings of the previous research that point to the positive impact of problem-based learning on encouraging students' critical thinking. The effects of problem-based learning on encouraging critical thinking of students are further elaborated through the presentation of its advantages and disadvantages in terms of encouraging critical thinking. The analysis of the advantages and disadvantages showed that the time spent proved to be a prominent disadvantage, while the focus on the student stands out as a pronounced advantage.

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The presence of research on this issue in the field of medicine leads to the conclusion that research is necessary outside the medical context. In that sense, it would be important to analyze the effects of problem-based learning on encouraging critical thinking of students of natural sciences on the one hand, and students of social sciences and the humanities on the other. Also, the general impression of the research is a reconsideration of the conceptual definition of critical thinking and problem-based learning, primarily the reconsideration of the critical thinking concept.

Keywords: problem-based learning, critical thinking, higher education

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