

**TEACHING PRACTICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING IN A  
SOCIETY MARKED BY DIGITAL MISINFORMATION**

 <https://doi.org/10.63330/aurumpub.072-002>

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### **Abstract**

The widespread circulation of digital misinformation has become a significant challenge for education, particularly because students are increasingly exposed to information whose credibility, accuracy, and intentions may be difficult to determine. In this context, the development of critical thinking becomes essential for enabling learners to question information, evaluate evidence, verify sources, and make informed decisions. This study aimed to analyze teaching practices described in the scientific literature that contribute to the development of critical thinking in a society marked by digital misinformation. A qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive literature review was conducted based on 16 scientific articles published in academic journals between 2016 and 2026, all written in English and identified through Google Scholar. The selected publications were examined through thematic analysis, considering their objectives, theoretical perspectives, pedagogical approaches, and contributions to the critical evaluation of digital information. The results indicate that the development of critical thinking is closely associated with media literacy, information literacy, source verification, argumentation, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, collaborative learning, fact-checking, lateral reading, civic online reasoning, and preventive strategies such as inoculation and prebunking. The literature also indicates that digital competence cannot be limited to the operational use of technological resources, as students require cognitive, analytical, reflective, and ethical abilities to evaluate the information they encounter. The findings further suggest that teaching practices are more effective when implemented systematically, contextualized through authentic digital content, and supported by intentional teacher mediation. It is concluded that education plays a fundamental role in strengthening students' capacity to critically engage with digital information and respond more responsibly to misinformation. The study contributes to the field by organizing relevant pedagogical strategies and emphasizing the importance of integrating critical thinking with digital, media, and information literacy in educational contexts.

**Keywords:** Critical Thinking, Digital Misinformation, Media Literacy, Teaching Practices.

## INTRODUCTION

The expansion of digital technologies and social media has transformed the ways in which people access, produce, and share information. Although digital environments have expanded opportunities for communication and learning, they have also facilitated the rapid dissemination of misleading and false content. In this context, digital misinformation has become a significant contemporary challenge, requiring individuals to develop the ability to critically evaluate the information they encounter.

Critical thinking plays an essential role in responding to this challenge. It involves the ability to analyze information, evaluate evidence, question assumptions, identify inconsistencies, and formulate reasoned judgments. Within education, developing these abilities can help students become more autonomous and reflective learners. Therefore, schools have an important responsibility to prepare students to interact critically and responsibly with the large volume of information available in digital environments.

The relevance of this issue extends to several areas of social life, including education, public health, scientific communication, and democratic participation. Students are increasingly exposed to information through social networks, websites, videos, and other digital platforms. However, familiarity with digital technologies does not necessarily mean that students are able to identify unreliable sources or recognize misleading information. This situation represents an important challenge for contemporary educational practices.

Despite the growing academic interest in critical thinking, digital literacy, and misinformation, there is still a need to better understand how teaching practices can effectively develop students' critical evaluation of digital information. Different pedagogical approaches may encourage questioning, source verification, evidence analysis, argumentation, and reflection. However, the relationship between these practices and students' ability to respond to misinformation remains an important area for further investigation.

The choice of this topic is justified by the increasing presence of misinformation in students' daily lives and by the need for educational strategies capable of addressing this phenomenon. Teaching practices that promote source comparison, fact-checking, discussion, problem-solving, and analysis of arguments can create opportunities for students to develop more critical approaches to information. Examining the scientific literature on these practices can therefore contribute to a better understanding of their educational potential.

Thus, the general objective of this literature review is to analyze teaching practices described in the scientific literature that contribute to the development of critical thinking in a society marked by digital misinformation. The study seeks to identify the main pedagogical approaches discussed by researchers and examine how these practices can support students in evaluating sources, interpreting evidence, questioning information, and making reasoned judgments.

From a scientific perspective, this review can contribute to the dialogue between education, critical thinking, and digital misinformation by organizing relevant findings from existing studies. From a practical perspective, it can provide teachers and educational institutions with theoretical and pedagogical elements for developing learning experiences focused on critical analysis and responsible digital participation. In this way, education can play an important role in preparing learners to engage with digital information more critically, autonomously, and responsibly.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is characterized as a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive literature review aimed at analyzing teaching practices for the development of critical thinking in a society marked by digital misinformation. The selection of the scientific literature was conducted based on predefined criteria, considering publications available between 2016 and 2026 in order to prioritize recent discussions on digital misinformation, critical thinking, media literacy, information literacy, and educational practices. The review comprised 16 scientific articles published in academic journals, selected according to their

relevance to the research topic, methodological consistency, academic contribution, and direct relationship with the research objective. Studies that did not address the relationship between education, critical thinking, digital information, or misinformation were excluded from the analysis.

Data collection was conducted exclusively through Google Scholar, which was used to identify and access scientific publications related to the central themes of the review. The search process prioritized articles published in English and available in academic journals. The 16 selected articles constituted the documentary corpus of the review and were examined according to their objectives, theoretical approaches, methodological characteristics, educational strategies, and contributions to the development of students' critical evaluation of digital information. The analysis was conducted through thematic analysis, allowing the findings to be organized into recurring thematic categories and facilitating the identification of convergences, divergences, and relevant patterns within the selected literature.

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout all stages of the review through respect for academic integrity, intellectual property, accurate representation of the information, and faithful attribution of ideas to their original sources. Since the study used exclusively publicly available scientific publications and did not involve direct participation by human subjects, interviews, questionnaires, or access to personal data, no direct interaction with research participants was required. Nevertheless, attention was given to the accurate interpretation of the selected publications and the preservation of their original meanings. The study is limited by the exclusive use of Google Scholar as the search source, the restriction of the corpus to 16 articles published in English, and the defined publication period, which may have excluded relevant studies available in other languages, databases, or periods. These limitations were considered when interpreting the findings and establishing the scope of the conclusions.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

According to Bas and Bolat (2022), critical thinking dispositions are closely related to individuals' ability to evaluate information encountered on social media, particularly when distinguishing reliable content from fake news, requiring learners to examine claims carefully, question the credibility of sources, compare available evidence, recognize inconsistencies, and avoid accepting information solely because it appears persuasive or widely shared, while the educational development of these abilities can strengthen students' autonomy in interpreting complex information environments, supporting more reflective decision-making and encouraging responsible participation in digital spaces, where the speed and volume of information circulation demand cognitive processes that go beyond simple access to technological resources.

As stated by Smith and Parker (2021), the educational challenge posed by misinformation involves not only recognizing false information but also developing systematic abilities to evaluate credibility, verify sources, distinguish different forms of misleading content, and establish criteria for responsible information use, making critical thinking an important component of educational responses to digital misinformation, especially because students increasingly encounter information through online environments in which professional journalism, personal opinions, manipulated content, commercial messages, and unsupported claims may appear within the same communicative space, requiring pedagogical approaches capable of helping learners establish distinctions between evidence-based knowledge and unreliable information.

According to Shabani and Keshavarz (2022), media literacy education can provide students with opportunities to recognize, question, and verify information by engaging them with authentic media content and sources, creating learning situations in which learners examine how misleading information affects individuals and institutions, compare different forms of media communication, and develop criteria for evaluating credibility, while the integration of inquiry-based activities and discussions about contemporary media issues can strengthen students' ability to interpret information critically and

participate more responsibly in digital environments, making media literacy an important educational pathway for addressing misinformation from an early stage of schooling.

As noted by Addy (2020), fact-checking can be incorporated into information literacy instruction as a practical strategy for helping learners evaluate digital information, encouraging them to examine sources, compare claims, verify evidence, and establish the reliability of information before accepting or sharing it, while activities based on digital, civic, and information literacy can promote more systematic forms of inquiry and reduce the tendency to rely on superficial indicators of credibility, making verification practices particularly relevant in educational contexts where students must navigate large volumes of rapidly circulating online content and develop greater responsibility in their consumption and dissemination of information.

In the words of Giri and Paily (2020), the development of students' ability to understand informal arguments requires explicit attention to the structural components of arguments, enabling learners to identify claims, reasons, relationships between ideas, and forms of reasoning within complex information, while instructional activities focused on argument comprehension can strengthen students' capacity to examine how conclusions are constructed and supported, providing an important foundation for critical evaluation, particularly in digital environments where misleading content may employ persuasive language, incomplete evidence, emotional appeals, or apparently logical arguments to influence readers' interpretations and decisions.

Based on the findings of Fadilla *et al.* (2021), problem-based learning can contribute to the development of students' critical thinking abilities by placing learners in situations that require the analysis of problems, consideration of possible explanations, evaluation of evidence, and construction of solutions, transforming learning into an active process in which students must mobilize knowledge rather than merely reproduce previously presented information, while the use of complex and contextualized problems can stimulate higher-order cognitive processes and create opportunities for learners to question

assumptions, compare alternatives, justify decisions, and develop reasoned conclusions that are particularly relevant to the evaluation of information in digital environments.

According to Duran and Dökme (2016), inquiry-oriented educational activities can encourage students to investigate questions related to misleading information, examine different sources, discuss competing interpretations, and formulate conclusions based on evidence, creating a learning environment in which knowledge is constructed through questioning and verification rather than passive reception, while the exploration of authentic media situations allows learners to connect classroom activities with problems encountered in everyday digital environments, strengthening their capacity to investigate information, recognize inconsistencies, evaluate alternative perspectives, and develop informed positions when confronted with uncertain or contradictory content.

As highlighted by Dame (2022), news literacy training can strengthen students' ability to evaluate the credibility of news content and develop more active responses to misinformation, particularly when educational activities provide knowledge about news production, credibility indicators, source evaluation, and strategies for dealing with questionable content, while structured interventions can also increase students' perceived capacity to respond to problematic information and encourage protective behaviors such as reporting misleading content, warning others, and seeking alternative sources, demonstrating the relevance of systematic educational practices for preparing students to interact critically with digital news environments.

According to Winebrugs and McGrew (2019), lateral reading constitutes an effective strategy for improving students' ability to evaluate online sources because it encourages learners to leave the original webpage and consult independent sources before accepting the information presented, allowing them to investigate the identity, purpose, reputation, and credibility of the source through comparative verification, while systematic practice with this strategy can modify students' information-search behaviors and strengthen their capacity to distinguish trustworthy content from misleading material,

making lateral reading particularly relevant to educational practices focused on digital misinformation and the development of critical and evidence-based judgment.

According to Breakstone *et al.* (2021), civic online reasoning provides students with structured procedures for evaluating digital information by focusing on the source of a claim, the evidence supporting it, and the relevance of available information, enabling learners to move beyond superficial characteristics such as professional appearance, popularity, or familiarity and instead investigate the context and credibility of digital content, while online tutorials and guided feedback can support the development of these practices by allowing students to observe appropriate verification procedures and apply them to texts, images, videos, and social media posts.

As stated by Cho and Carpenter (2025), digital media literacy interventions can improve individuals' ability to distinguish between accurate and false news by providing practical guidance for identifying misleading content and encouraging more careful evaluation of information, particularly when learners are exposed to examples that require them to apply verification criteria rather than simply memorize definitions of misinformation, while the effectiveness of such interventions suggests that educational activities focused on source evaluation and content discernment can contribute to more responsible engagement with digital information and reduce vulnerability to misleading narratives circulating through online platforms.

According to Roozenbeek, Linden and Nygren (2020), online media literacy programs based on inoculation principles can prepare individuals to recognize misinformation by introducing them to common misleading strategies before they encounter similar content in real digital environments, allowing learners to develop greater awareness of manipulation techniques and apply critical evaluation procedures when confronted with questionable information, while educational videos and interactive resources can make these preventive practices accessible and adaptable to different contexts,

strengthening students' capacity to identify false information and encouraging a more deliberate approach to content encountered through social media.

As noted by Angelelli (2023), gamification can support the development of critical thinking by transforming learning activities into interactive experiences that require learners to analyze information, make decisions, solve problems, and consider the consequences of different choices, while the incorporation of game-based elements can increase students' engagement with complex digital issues and provide opportunities to experiment with different responses to misinformation, creating a learning environment in which critical evaluation becomes an active and contextualized process rather than an exclusively theoretical exercise.

According to Gillies (2016), pedagogical approaches based on dialogue, discussion, and collaborative analysis can create opportunities for learners to examine different perspectives concerning misinformation and develop more complex forms of reasoning, particularly when educational activities encourage students to question information, justify their positions, compare interpretations, and construct conclusions collectively, while interaction among peers can expose learners to alternative viewpoints and stimulate reflection on the criteria used to determine whether information is reliable, making collaborative learning a relevant strategy for strengthening critical engagement with digital content.

In the words of Holincheck, Galanti and Trefil (2022), scientific literacy can contribute to the development of critical abilities necessary for confronting misinformation by enabling learners to understand how scientific knowledge is produced, evaluate evidence, distinguish methodological rigor from unsupported claims, and question information that presents itself as scientific without adequate justification, while educational practices that connect scientific concepts with contemporary digital content can help students recognize pseudoscientific narratives and develop more responsible criteria for evaluating information, strengthening the relationship between science education, critical thinking, and digital citizenship.

In alignment with Hsu and Chen (2026), educational interventions aimed at mitigating misinformation among students require intentional pedagogical mediation, sustained learning experiences, and contextualized approaches that connect critical thinking with the responsible use of digital information, allowing learners to develop not only technical abilities for identifying misleading content but also reflective dispositions concerning how information is consumed, interpreted, evaluated, and shared, while the diversity of theoretical frameworks and intervention strategies indicates the importance of teacher guidance in creating learning environments that encourage verification, questioning, ethical participation, and informed decision-making within contemporary digital contexts.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The literature review indicates that the development of critical thinking represents one of the central educational responses to the challenges associated with digital misinformation. The studies analyzed converge on the understanding that access to digital technologies alone does not ensure the ability to identify reliable information, requiring pedagogical interventions that develop analytical, evaluative, and reflective abilities. Critical thinking emerges as a multidimensional competence involving the examination of evidence, questioning of claims, recognition of inconsistencies, evaluation of sources, and formulation of reasoned judgments. This finding is directly related to the objective of the review, since the analyzed literature consistently associates the development of these abilities with greater capacity to navigate complex digital information environments.

A second major finding concerns the importance of media literacy and information literacy in confronting misinformation. The literature indicates that students need to develop specific competencies for evaluating the credibility, purpose, context, and evidence associated with digital content. Activities involving source comparison, fact-checking, verification of claims, and analysis of media messages appear as relevant educational practices for strengthening these competencies. There is considerable

convergence regarding the need to move beyond a purely technical understanding of digital literacy, since knowing how to access, produce, and share content does not necessarily imply the ability to evaluate its reliability. Therefore, the results suggest that critical digital literacy should incorporate cognitive and reflective dimensions capable of supporting more responsible information practices.

Another relevant axis identified in the literature concerns pedagogical methodologies that place students in active learning situations. Problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, argumentation activities, and collaborative learning are associated with opportunities for students to investigate problems, compare perspectives, analyze evidence, formulate explanations, and justify conclusions. These approaches demonstrate greater alignment with the development of critical thinking because they position learners as active participants in the construction and evaluation of knowledge. The literature therefore suggests a convergence around the importance of replacing exclusively transmissive practices with pedagogical experiences that require questioning, reasoning, discussion, and evidence-based decision-making, particularly when the activities address authentic problems related to digital information.

The analyzed studies also identify specific strategies for evaluating online information, especially lateral reading, civic online reasoning, and fact-checking. These approaches provide students with practical procedures for verifying information instead of relying on superficial indicators such as the visual appearance of a website, the popularity of a publication, or the number of interactions generated by digital content. The results indicate that structured instruction can help learners investigate the origin of information, compare independent sources, examine supporting evidence, and determine whether claims are adequately substantiated. This finding is particularly relevant to the research problem because it demonstrates that critical thinking can be translated into concrete classroom practices that support students when they encounter questionable information in digital environments.

The literature further reveals the potential of preventive approaches, particularly inoculation and prebunking strategies, which seek to prepare individuals to recognize misleading techniques before they encounter misinformation. These approaches differ from corrective practices because they emphasize

anticipation and prior preparation rather than intervention after false information has already been accepted. The results indicate that exposure to examples of manipulation techniques, combined with opportunities to identify and analyze them, may strengthen resistance to misleading content. However, the literature also suggests that the effectiveness of these strategies depends on the quality of the educational intervention and on students' ability to transfer the acquired knowledge to different informational contexts, indicating that isolated activities may be insufficient for sustained development.

Another important finding relates to the role of teachers and educational mediation. The studies analyzed indicate that the effectiveness of strategies aimed at developing critical thinking depends substantially on intentional planning, appropriate guidance, contextualized activities, and opportunities for reflection. Digital misinformation is a constantly changing phenomenon, which requires teachers to integrate contemporary examples into educational practices while avoiding approaches based solely on memorizing criteria for identifying false information. Some differences can be observed in the literature regarding the most effective methodologies, with certain studies emphasizing explicit instruction in verification procedures and others prioritizing active, collaborative, or inquiry-based approaches. Despite these differences, there is broad agreement that teacher mediation remains essential for connecting digital literacy, critical thinking, and responsible participation.

Overall, the results indicate that no single teaching practice is sufficient to address the complexity of digital misinformation. The most consistent evidence favors an integrated educational approach combining critical thinking, media and information literacy, source verification, argumentation, inquiry, collaborative learning, and practical strategies such as lateral reading and fact-checking. The literature therefore provides an affirmative response to the research problem by indicating that teaching practices can contribute significantly to students' ability to critically evaluate digital information when they are systematic, contextualized, and intentionally connected to authentic informational challenges. Consequently, the findings reinforce the educational role of schools and teachers in preparing learners not

merely to access digital content, but to question, verify, interpret, and responsibly use the information that influences their individual and collective decisions.

## **FINAL REMARKS**

The literature review allowed an analysis of teaching practices associated with the development of critical thinking in contexts marked by digital misinformation. The results indicate that critical thinking, media literacy, information literacy, source verification, argumentation, inquiry, and active learning methodologies constitute important elements in addressing this challenge. The general objective of the research was therefore achieved, as the reviewed literature made it possible to identify and discuss pedagogical practices capable of strengthening students' abilities to analyze, evaluate, question, and interpret digital information.

Regarding the research problem, the literature indicates that teaching practices can effectively contribute to students' ability to deal with misinformation when they are systematically incorporated into educational processes. Strategies such as fact-checking, lateral reading, civic online reasoning, problem-based learning, inquiry-based activities, collaborative discussion, and preventive approaches can provide students with practical and cognitive resources for evaluating information. The findings also indicate that digital competence should not be restricted to the operational use of technological tools, but should include critical, ethical, and reflective dimensions that enable learners to make more informed decisions.

The main limitation of this study is its dependence on the characteristics, methodological approaches, educational contexts, and publication periods of the studies included in the literature review, which may restrict the generalization of the findings to all educational realities. In addition, the rapid transformation of digital platforms and misinformation strategies means that educational practices identified as effective may require continuous adaptation. These limitations reinforce the need for educators and institutions to treat critical digital literacy as an ongoing educational process rather than as an isolated curricular activity.

Future investigations may examine the effectiveness of specific teaching practices through empirical studies involving different educational levels, cultural contexts, and student profiles. Comparative research may also investigate combinations of fact-checking, lateral reading, inquiry-based learning, argumentation, and digital media literacy to identify which approaches produce more sustainable learning outcomes. In practical terms, the findings support the development of teacher training programs, educational materials, classroom activities, and institutional initiatives focused on critical evaluation of digital information, contributing to the formation of learners who can participate in digital environments with greater autonomy, responsibility, and analytical capacity.

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