

# **STRATEGIES USED IN ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS OF LEARNERS IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL IN GUMACA, QUEZON**



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## Strategies Used in Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills of Learners in Social Studies in a Private School in Gumaca, Quezon

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### Abstract

This study aimed to determine the strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills of learners in Social Studies in a Private School in Gumaca, Quezon. It determined the profile of the learners in terms of age, sex, and grade level. It also revealed the effects of the following in enhancing critical thinking skills in teaching Social Studies in terms of using of essential question, fostering discussion and debate, integrating current events and issues, and assessing and reflecting. The researcher used descriptive method of research. This study employed quota sampling design. Under this procedure, the researcher considered to used one hundred (100) respondents from the selected Junior High School students in a Private School in Gumaca, Quezon to get the 100% of the respondents. The findings revealed that most of the respondents are within 14 to 15 years old. The female respondents outnumbered the male population. Respondents were Grade 7, Grade 8, Grade 9, and Grade 10. This study revealed that the average mean of 3.93 interpreted as Agree indicated that most of the respondents are agreed on the effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in terms of using essential questions. Likewise, the average mean of 4.05 interpreted as Agree, indicated that most of the respondents agreed on the effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in terms of fostering discussion and debate. In the average mean of 3.90 interpreted as Agree indicated that most of the respondents agreed on the effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in terms of integrating current events and issues. The study also revealed that in the average of 4.05 interpreted as Agree, indicated the most of the respondents agreed on the effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in terms of assessing and reflection. Based from the results of the Kruskal Wallis H-test all the null hypothesis of age is rejected which means there is a significant difference on the perceived effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills of learners in Araling Panlipunan when respondents are grouped according to age. Meanwhile in sex the null hypothesis is accepted which means there is no significant difference on the perceived effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills of learners in Araling Panlipunan according to sex. In terms of grade level, the null hypothesis is rejected which means there is a significant difference on the perceived effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills of learners in Araling Panlipunan when respondents are grouped by grade level. From the result of this study, the following were recommended: school administrators may conduct training and seminars for different intervention strategies to integrate current events and issues into the classroom for the learners, parents may monitor their children about using strategies to being aware on current events and issues to apply in the classroom, teacher may provide activities that will involve the learners on integrating current events and issues so that learners will be aware on the current events and issues happening in their surroundings to enhance their critical thinking skills, students may do some practices and be updated on the news aired on television and radio that will improve their awareness on current events and issues, future researchers, they may conduct a parallel study which gives more emphasis on strategies use in enhancing critical thinking skills of learners in Social Studies.

**Keywords:** *assessing and reflecting, critical thinking, current events and issues, discussion and debate, enhancing, essential question*

### Introduction

Critical thinking is a skill that ranges back almost to the time of Christ, as it is again traced back into the philosophical musings of Plato, one of the most influential thinkers in the history of humankind. To study in his dialogues was to indulge in the most philosophical sense of argumentation; by continually interrogating truths, assumptions and seeking turning points in differing views, he had no idea that what he was doing was setting up a ground for what he now calls critical thinking. This last expression should include much more than philosophy; it is an important life skill in contemporary society. That is, it is to actively review, examine and evaluate the information derived from multiplicity of sources for the purpose of wise decision-making.

On the context of education, students must develop several important skills in order to improve their selves and their learning experiences. These skills include problem-solving, collaboration, and critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is one of the most important of these abilities. It is the foundation for effective decision-making and problem-solving. Critical thinking helps for solving problems, whether they are mathematical equations, situational analysis, or any type of questions asked.

Critical thinking is defined by Oxford dictionary as objective analysis and evaluation of issues in order to form a judgment. Though seemingly simplistic, this definition is more difficult to achieve in practice, and hence people make judgments without the necessary requisite objective analysis and evaluation, leading to possibly wrong conclusions.

According to Jasnani (2022), critical thinking enables the students to be cautious while making decisions about life; not rushing them without regard to the other sides but taking time to weigh all possible factors. It also enhances the discovery of problems and encourages social interaction and systematic problem-solving in the learning environment.

Furthermore, Insights Assessment (2023) emphasizes the importance of critical thinking by emphasizing how a lack of this skill can result in missed opportunities, financial losses, strained relationships, and even life-altering consequences.

Moreover, Cliffs Notes (2023) emphasizes that individuals without critical thinking may make poor decisions based on false information, potentially limiting their personal freedom and well-being.

The researchers goal in this study, Strategies Used in Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills of Learners in Social Studies in a Private School in Gumaca, Quezon, which will be conducted at Eastern Quezon College in Gumaca is to look into the specific factors that contribute to the enhancing of critical thinking skills of the students in Social Studies.

## Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to determine the strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills of learners as perceived by selected junior high school students in a private school in Gumaca, Quezon, for the school year 2023-2024. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the learners in terms of:
  - 1.1. Age;
  - 1.2. sex; and
  - 1.3. grade level?
2. What are the effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in teaching Social Studies in terms of:
  - 2.1. using of essential question;
  - 2.2. fostering discussion and debate;
  - 2.3. integrating current events and issues; and
  - 2.4. assessing and reflecting?
3. Is there a significant difference in the perceived strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in Social Studies when respondents are grouped by profile?

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study used a descriptive survey method to collect the data and to measure the strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills of learners in Social Studies in a private school in Gumaca, Quezon. The researcher used survey questionnaire as an instrument. Based on the survey's result the researcher were determined the details of the study.

According to Shuttleworth (2019), descriptive research design is a scientific method that entails observing and describing a subject's behavior without influencing it in any way.

### Respondents

In order to know the result of this study, the researcher determined the target population. This study discussed the strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills of junior high school students. The respondents of this study were composed of 100 Junior high school students studying in Eastern Quezon College Inc. Gumaca, Quezon. Quota Sampling was used in this study. According to Simkus,J., (2023), quota sampling is a non-probability sampling method where the researcher selects participants based on specific characteristics, ensuring they present certain attributes in proportion to their prevalence in the population. It's like stratified sampling but without random selection with each stratum.

### Instrument

The researcher used survey questionnaires as a research instrument. This questionnaire is a likert scale of ; 5 – Very Much Agree (VMA), 4 – Agree (A), 3 – Moderately Agree (MA), 2 – Less Agree (LA) and 1 – Least Agree (LEA), for understanding about the concept of factors enhancing critical thinking skills of learners in Social Studies in a private school in Gumaca, Quezon . The researcher prepared research based questionnaire to the respondents, were checked and validated by two experts. Part I were composed of profile of the learners and Part II includes the factors enhancing critical thinking skills of learners in Social Studies in terms of use of essential question, fostering discussion and debate, integrating current events and issues and assessing and reflecting.

A pilot testing was conducted to twelve (12) respondents from a school which is not a target of the study using Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency of the research instrument. The result of using essential questions is 0.93 which means there is an internal consistency of the instrument and it is interpreted as excellent. In fostering discussion and debate is 0.98 which means there is an internal consistency of the instrument and it is interpreted as excellent. Meanwhile the result of integrating

current events and issues is 0.95 which means there is an internal consistency of the instrument and it is interpreted as excellent. And the result of assessing and reflecting is 0.97 which means there is an internal consistency of the instrument and it is interpreted as excellent.

### Procedure

Target populations was selected Junior High School students of Eastern Quezon College Inc. in Gumaca, Quezon. The descriptive research method using likert scale was used in order to determine the strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills of learners in Social Studies. Data was gathered through quota sampling both male and female Junior High School students of Eastern Quezon College Inc. was selected to fill the questionnaire.

Prior to the conduct of the study, the researcher sent a letter to the principal of the Junior High School Department in Eastern Quezon College Inc. in Gumaca Quezon. Upon approval, the researcher administered the instrument to the target respondents.

In administering the questionnaire, the researcher was used the time allotted for vacant time to avoid distraction of class discussion. The student response was be given enough time to answer the questions. After data gathering, the researcher collected it for tallying the scores and to apply the statistical treatment to be used in the study.

### Data Analysis

In this study, the researcher was used statistical measures to treat the collected data. All the data were carefully read and examined for analysis. They were tallied and entered into a master list of the data collection sheet. Percentage and Frequency Distribution was used to interpret the profile of the respondents. Where: P - percentage, f - number of responses, N - number of respondents. To get the weighted mean to describe the items in the indicators, the researcher was used the formula (Calmorin, 2007; 116-118). To test the significant difference of three or more means, the researcher was used the Kruskal-Wallis for non-parametric test.

## Results and Discussion

This section shows the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the gathered data from the respondents. The data were presented in the tabular form followed by its descriptive analysis. The interpretation of the data were also provided to elaborate the data from the table.

Table 1. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According Age*

| Age                    | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Rank |
|------------------------|-----------|----------------|------|
| 12-13 years old        | 33        | 33             | 2    |
| 14-15 years old        | 61        | 50             | 1    |
| 16-17 years old        | 6         | 17             | 3    |
| 18 years old and above | 0         | 0              | 4    |
| Total                  | 100       | 100            |      |

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents according to age. Of the total respondents, 61 individuals, or 61%, were 14-15 years old, while 33 individuals, or 33%, were 12-13 years old, and 6 individuals, or 6%, were 16-17 years old. No respondents were aged 18 years old and above. Therefore, it can be inferred that most of the junior high school students' respondents were between 14-15 years old based on the highest frequency and percentage of respondents in this age range. Age distribution is important when considering cognitive development. According to Bouygues (2019), children enter the "formal operational stage" around age 11 or 12, a phase identified by Jean Piaget, where they start to think abstractly, apply general principles, and engage in logical reasoning. However, Dwyer (2017) states that even mature students often underestimate their critical thinking abilities.

As a student teacher, this information means that instructional strategies and classroom activities should cater to the developmental and cognitive needs of this age group. Being cognizant of the fact that the majority of the students fall under the age bracket will help in planning engaging, relevant, and well-challenging lessons. Moreover, also taking into consideration the lesser number of students having ages of 12-13 and 16-17 brings in the idea of differentiated instruction to accommodate the varying levels of maturity and learning needs of the students in the classroom.

Table 2. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Sex*

| Sex    | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Rank |
|--------|-----------|----------------|------|
| Male   | 45        | 45             | 2    |
| Female | 55        | 55             | 1    |
| Total  | 100       | 100            |      |

Table 2 exhibits the distribution of respondents according to sex. Male respondents had a frequency of 45, which accounts for 45%, while female respondents had a frequency of 55, which accounts for 55%. Therefore, it can be inferred that the majority of the junior high school student respondents were female.

Emman (2023) studied students' critical thinking skills in three different junior high schools. The results revealed that the average score of female students was higher than that of male students. Female students tended to give more detailed and thorough answers than male students. Additionally, male students tended to answer differently on the topics in the questions.

As a student teacher, this also signifies that the gender distribution in the classroom, as well as the conversations and activities, can vary with gender, i.e., more male or female students than the others. These are thus the features of the learning environment in which both women and men feel comfortable and which accommodates their diverse styles of learning. The knowledge of a given demographic may make it easier for the teachers to select the topics that will suit the pupils' vision and in that way, they can make sure the students' perceptions and thoughts are not limited.

Table 3. *Frequency & Percentage Distribution of the Respondents in Terms of Grade Level*

| Grade Level | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Rank |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|------|
| Grade 7     | 25        | 25             | 2.5  |
| Grade 8     | 25        | 25             | 2.5  |
| Grade 9     | 25        | 25             | 2.5  |
| Grade 10    | 25        | 25             | 2.5  |
| Total       | 100       | 100            |      |

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents based on their grade level. It indicates an even distribution across the different grade levels from Grade 7 to Grade 10 with a frequency of 25 or 25% of the total number of respondents.

Abrami et al. (2015) emphasize that effective teaching strategies can enhance critical thinking skills across various academic levels and fields of study, highlighting the universality of this skill. Provenzano (2023) emphasizes the importance of critical thinking beyond academia, emphasizing its importance in navigating life's challenges, from personal financial management to complex decision-making processes in various areas

As a student teacher, this indicates that there is the participation of pupils from all classes of equal number, the result of which can promote peer learning as well as interaction among kids of different age brackets. Moreover, the distribution of academic levels among students signifies that teachers need to think about the different stages of the academic and social development of their students while preparing lesson and the need for the teacher to pay attention to the variety of school and social stages while assisting his/her students. Differentiated instruction and scaffolding are examples of varied teaching methods that serve to aid the students in achieving their goals in a diverse situation and thus assure all pupils find themselves in a matching situation miles away from the mediocrities of learning resources used in the various places.

Table 4. *Respondents Assessment on the Perceived Effects of Strategies Used in Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills in Teaching Social Studies in Terms of Using Essential Questions*

| Indicators   | Mean | Verbal Interpretation | Rank |
|--|------|-----------------------|------|
| <i>Through the using of essential question...</i>                          |      |                       |      |
| 1. I am more engaged and interested in Social Studies class.               | 3.93 | Agree                 | 3    |
| 2. It can help me understand Social Studies topic more deeply              | 4.03 | Agree                 | 1    |
| 3. I am challenged critically in Social Studies lessons.                   | 3.91 | Agree                 | 4    |
| 4. I am encouraged to value my learning experience in Social Studies class | 3.84 | Much Agree            | 5    |
| 5. it encourages me to think critically in my Social Studies class.        | 3.94 | Agree                 | 2    |
| Grand Mean:  | 3.93 | Agree                 |      |

*Legend:* Least Agree (1.0-1.80), Less Agree (1.81-2.60), Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40), Agree (3.41-4.20), Very Much Agree (4.21-5.0).

Table 4 illustrates the perceived effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in teaching Social Studies in terms of using essential questions. The respondents agree that essential questions help them understand Social Studies topics more deeply evidenced by a mean of 4.03 and ranks first among the other indicators. On the other hand, the respondents moderately agree that essential questions encouraged them to value their learning experience in Social Studies class as shown by a mean of 3.84 and ranks least among the indicators. The average mean of 3.93 interpreted as "agree" implies that the respondents agree that the use of essential questions can enhance their critical thinking skills.

The study results indicate that using key questions in Social Studies lessons can be a helpful approach for encouraging students to deeply comprehend the content and enhance their critical thinking abilities. While it may not significantly influence their perceived value of the learning process as much as their level of understanding, it still positively contributes to their overall learning outcomes.

Cornell University's Foundation (2023) research emphasizes the importance of questions in learning. Effective questioning goes beyond just testing understanding - it fuels peer discussions and exploration of key concepts. By encouraging meaningful dialogue and



challenging students to grapple with complex ideas, both closed-ended and open-ended questions play a vital role in nurturing critical thinking. Closed-ended questions provide quick assessments of comprehension, while open-ended queries stimulate deeper thinking and promote collaborative learning. This ultimately enhances students' ability to process information and engage critically with the course material.

The results of the study implied that critical thinking skills and deep understanding of the material could really be developed simply by incorporating essential questions during Social Studies classes. The students' perceived value of their learning experience only increased a moderate degree, yet the positive overall effect on learning outcomes clearly demonstrates the usefulness of this strategy. In this case, teachers of Social Studies will thus definitely move the theme of essential questions in their teaching as a top priority in order to gift themselves and their students with a more enjoyable and intellectually stimulating classroom environment.

**Table 5. Respondents' Assessment on the Perceived Effects of Strategies Used in Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills in Teaching Social Studies in Terms of Fostering Discussion and Debate**

| Indicators   | Mean | Verbal Interpretation | Rank |
|--|------|-----------------------|------|
| <i>Through fostering discussion and debate...</i>                          |      |                       |      |
| 1. I feel encouraged to express my opinions in Social Studies class.       | 4.13 | Agree                 | 1    |
| 2. it helps me develop a deeper understanding in Social Studies subject.   | 4.09 | Agree                 | 3    |
| 3. it helps me to recall specific instances in the Social Studies subject. | 3.98 | Agree                 | 4    |
| 4. it enhances my critical thinking skills in Social Studies subject.      | 3.91 | Agree                 | 5    |
| 5. it enhances my learning in Social Studies subject.                      | 4.12 | Agree                 | 2    |
| Grand Mean:  | 4.05 | Agree                 |      |

**Legend:** Least Agree (1.0-1.80), Less Agree (1.81-2.60), Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40), Agree (3.41-4.20), Very Much Agree (4.21-5.0).

Table 5 shows the perceived effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in teaching Social Studies in terms of fostering discussion and debate. The respondents agree that discussion and debate help them feel encouraged to express their opinions in Social Studies class indicated by a mean of 4.13 and ranks first among the indicators.

Meanwhile, the respondents also agree that discussion and debate can enhance their critical thinking skills in Social Studies subject evident by a mean of 3.91 though it ranks last among the indicators. The average mean of 4.05 interpreted as “agree” implies that the respondents agree that fostering discussion and debate in Social Studies can enhance their critical thinking skills.

The study shows that students are encouraged to share their thoughts during

Social Studies discussions and debates. This stresses the value of fostering a classroom setting that embraces diverse perspectives and encourages active participation. When students feel comfortable expressing their views, it enriches classroom discussions and deepens their overall understanding of the subject.

Research from the University of Calgary (2023) supports these findings, suggesting that the effective use of discussion-based pedagogies has many potential advantages in terms of resulting learning outcomes for students, including enhanced development of critical thinking skills, problem solving ability, and understanding of diverse perspectives, amongst others.

The results of the study implied that critical thinking skills and deep understanding of the material could really be developed simply by incorporating essential questions during Social Studies classes. The students' perceived value of their learning experience only increased a moderate degree, yet the positive overall effect on learning outcomes clearly demonstrates the usefulness of this strategy. In this case, teachers of Social Studies will thus definitely move the theme of essential questions in their teaching as a top priority in order to gift themselves and their students with a more enjoyable and intellectually stimulating classroom environment.

**Table 6. Respondents Assessment on the Perceived Effects of Strategies Used in Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills in Teaching Social Studies in Terms of Integrating Current Events and Issues**

| Indicators   | Mean | Verbal Interpretation | Rank |
|--|------|-----------------------|------|
| <i>Through integrating current events and issues...</i>                          |      |                       |      |
| 1. I feel more engaged in my Social Studies class.                               | 3.98 | Agree                 | 2    |
| 2. it easily updates me about the Social Studies topic discussed by the teacher. | 3.72 | Agree                 | 4.5  |
| 3. it enhances my critical thinking skills in Social Studies lesson.             | 4.17 | Agree                 | 1    |
| 4. it helps me to connect theoretical concepts to the real world.                | 3.72 | Agree                 | 4.5  |
| 5. it sharpens my critical thinking skill in Social Studies subject.             | 3.89 | Agree                 | 3    |
| Grand Mean:  | 3.90 | Agree                 |      |

**Legend:** Least Agree (1.0-1.80), Less Agree (1.81-2.60), Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40), Agree (3.41-4.20), Very Much Agree (4.21-5.0).

Table 6 reveals the perceived effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in teaching Social Studies in terms of integrating current events and issues. The respondents agree that integrating current events and issues enhances their critical thinking skills in Social Studies lesson shown by a mean of 4.17 and ranks first among the indicators.

Also, the respondents agree that integrating current events and issues easily updates them about the Social Studies topic discussed by the teacher and helps them to connect theoretical concepts to the real world shown by a mean of 3.72 and ranks last among the indicators. The average mean of 3.90 interpreted as “agree” implies that the respondents agree that integrating current events and issues in Social Studies can enhance their critical thinking skills.

This suggests that incorporating real-world examples encourages students to analyze, evaluate and apply their knowledge in a critical manner. This, in turn, cultivates deeper understanding and more advanced thinking skills. While integrating current events and issues ranks lowest, it still suggests that respondents believe this practice helps connect theoretical concepts to the real world. This finding highlights the importance of bridging abstract ideas with practical scenarios to deepen students' understanding of Social Studies topics.

Guertin (2020) highlighted the importance of incorporating current event news stories into the classroom. This strategy enables students to link their education with real-world events, promoting personal development as they interact with articles and assignments related to these subjects.

Additionally, Bahmani (2016), stated that when students engage in the practice of regularly connecting the theories presented in their lessons and textbooks to the analysis of current events through writing and presentations, it leads to improvements in their learning and critical thinking skills. This approach serves as a valuable educational strategy for fostering a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts by applying them to practical, real-world situation.

It informs that the educators have to practically blend the current events and issues locally and globally in teaching Social Studies so that students become proficient in critical thinking. The student teacher is required to learn that by utilizing practical and real-life examples in the course, pupils will be better equipped to analyze, evaluate, and apply knowledge critically. Pupils can become easily engaged in such an environment if teachers show them the relationship between the theoretical concepts they are learning and the real-life scenarios around. In addition to the part it plays in critical thinking, this is a determiner to the students' capability to explore and interpret the complexities of the real world.

*Table 7. Respondents Assessment on the Perceived Effects of Strategies Used in Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills in Teaching Social Studies in Terms of Assessing and Reflecting*

| Indicators   | Mean        | Verbal Interpretation | Rank |
|--|-------------|-----------------------|------|
| <i>Through assessing and reflecting I ...</i>  |             |                       |      |
| 1.can think critically about what I have learned.  | 4.21        | Agree                 | 2    |
| 2.can analyze arguments in Social Studies lessons.                                       | 4.08        | Agree                 | 3    |
| 3.can provide evidence and formulate my own conclusion.                                  | 3.81        | Agree                 | 5    |
| 4.can improve my critical thinking skills in Social Studies subject.                     | 3.89        | Agree                 | 4    |
| 5.can reflect on my own learning experiences to identify areas where I need improvement. | 4.28        | Very Much Agree       | 1    |
| <b>Grand Mean:</b>   | <b>4.05</b> | <b>Agree</b>          |      |

*Legend: Least Agree (1.0-1.80), Less Agree (1.81-2.60), Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40), Agree (3.41-4.20), Very Much Agree (4.21-5.0).*

Table 7 demonstrates the perceived effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in teaching Social Studies in terms of assessing and reflecting. The respondents agree that assessing and reflecting helps them to reflect on their own learning experiences to identify areas where they need improvement, evidenced by a mean of 4.28 and ranks first among the indicators.

Additionally, the respondents agree that assessing and reflecting helps them provide evidence and formulate their own conclusion evidenced by a mean of 3.81 and ranks last among the indicators. The average mean of 4.05 interpreted as “agree” implies that the respondents agree that assessing and reflecting can enhance their critical thinking skills in Social Studies Class.

The survey results indicate that assessing and reflecting are recommended strategies for improving critical thinking skills in Social Studies education. The respondents' agreement with the benefits of these methods suggests they recognized the importance of self-assessment and reflection in their learning process. Educators can incorporate more opportunities for self-assessment and reflection to support students' critical thinking growth.

Andrus (2023) on her journal entitled “Strategies for Encouraging Critical Thinking Skills in Students” emphasizes the importance of dedicating time to reflection and metacognitive practices within the field of education. This entails motivating students to evaluate their cognitive processes, contemplate their learning journeys, and pinpoint avenues for enhancement. Engaging in activities like journaling, self-assessment, and group discussions facilitates this reflective journey, fostering heightened self-awareness regarding thought patterns and the formulation of strategies to enhance critical thinking skills.

It highlights the value of assessment and reflection as methods to upgrade the critical thinking skills in Social Studies. In the role of a student teacher this means regularly providing students with the possibility to self-assess their learning progress and reflect on the actual state of their learning is without a shadow of a doubt essential.

By practicing in this manner, you let students easily notice their strengths and weaknesses, thus, a high level of involvement in the subject is guaranteed. The students will not only be engaged in reaching the right conclusions but will also encourage the growth of the learning process. If one were to integrate self-assessment and reflection into his/her classroom it would be generating a more self-

aware, critical, and independent environment.

Table 8. *Summary Table*

| <i>Perceived Effects of Strategies Used in Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills</i> | <i>Average</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>Verbal Interpretation</i> | <i>Rank</i> |
|---|----------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| Using Essential Questions   | 3.93           |             | Agree                        | 3           |
| Fostering Discussion and Debate   | 4.05           |             | Agree                        | 1.5         |
| Integrating Current Events and Issues   | 3.90           |             | Agree                        | 4           |
| Assessing and Reflecting  | 4.05           |             | Agree                        | 1.5         |

*Legend: Least Agree (1.0-1.80), Less Agree (1.81-2.60), Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40), Agree (3.41-4.20), Very Much Agree (4.21-5.0).*

Table 8 presents the summary table on the perceived effects of strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in Social Studies classes. It revealed that the respondents agree that fostering discussion and debate as well as assessing and reflecting have the most significant effect in enhancing their critical thinking skills in Social Studies evidenced by the highest mean of 4.05. Meanwhile, the respondents agree that integrating current events and issues can enhance their critical thinking skills in Social Studies though it ranks last with an average mean of 3.90.

The agreement among respondents that fostering discussion and debate, as well as assessing and reflecting, are highly effective suggests the effectiveness of interactive and reflective teaching methods in enhancing critical thinking. Educators can prioritize these strategies to develop critical thinking among students.

Furthermore, there are opportunities for improvement, particularly in strengthening the integration of current events and issues to improve critical thinking skills. These findings emphasize the importance of aligning teaching strategies with educational objectives and continuously refining practices to improve critical thinking in the social studies curriculum.

With these findings, Chun-Lok and al. (2013) emphasize the effectiveness of group work, particularly in facilitating small-group debates, as a means of enhancing critical thinking. Jones (2014) emphasizes the importance of group discussion in enhancing positive student outcomes, particularly in large classes. These findings collectively emphasize the importance of interactive conversation in language development, and the effectiveness of group work and group discussion in promoting critical thinking skills.

As a student teacher, this is a clear indication that engaging methods like interactive and reflective teaching, such as discussions, debates, and reflective assessments, can greatly improve students' critical thinking skills. Besides other measures, a teacher's lesson plan must include these strategies, which are also valid activities for the class. On the other hand, the slightly lower score for the inclusion of current events and issues indicates that there is a possibility of making these topics more interesting and relevant to schoolers. This goal might be achieved by connecting the dots between the ongoing situations and the students' lives in a more explicit manner and, at the same time, by letting them think and chat critically about those issues. In sum, the research findings confirm that teachers must continually improve teaching methods so that they match educational objectives and foster the effectiveness of developing students' critical thinking skills in the social studies curriculum.

Table 9. *Significant differences on the Perceived Strategies Used in Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills in Social Studies when Respondents are Grouped According to Age*

| <i>Groups</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Median</i> | <i>df</i> | <i><math>\chi^2</math>(H value)</i> | <i><math>\chi^2_c</math> (Critical Value)</i> | <i>Significant Level</i> | <i>P- value</i> | <i>Decision</i> |
|---------------|----------|---------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 12-13 y/old   | 33       | 4.25          |           |                                     |   |                          |                 |                 |
| 14-15 y/old   | 61       | 4.00          | 2         | 8.272                               | 5.991   | 0.05                     | 0.016           | Reject Ho       |
| 16-17 y/old   | 6        | 3.58          |           |                                     |   |                          |                 |                 |

Table 9 demonstrates the significant differences on the perceived strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in Social Studies when respondents are grouped according to age. Since the H value of 8.272 is greater than the critical value of 5.991 with a P-value of 0.016 at a 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that there is a significant difference in the responses of different age groups towards the effects of strategies used to enhance the critical thinking skills in their Social Studies classes.

The study suggests that a person's age is a crucial factor in how they perceive the effectiveness of strategies to improve critical thinking skills in Social Studies. Educators should recognize that students of varying ages have diverse perspectives, and they should plan their teaching strategies accordingly. Techniques that are effective with one age group may not be as effective or relevant for another. As a result, educators may need to modify their approaches to better align with the needs and preferences of students from different age groups.

Dwyer (2017) asserts that even mature students often underestimate their critical thinking abilities, indicating a need for continued development and practice. Gordon (2021) further emphasized that critical thinking skills are essential for both academic and professional success. Without these skills, students may face significant challenges. Parents play a crucial role in developing these skills, preparing their children for independent and well-informed decisions.

As a student teacher, the findings of this study highlight the importance of paying attention to the students age when determining their readiness to employ a set of strategies for fostering critical thinking in the subject of Social Studies. The research study points out that teaching methods that are individualized and adjusted to the characteristics of various age cohorts are the keys towards fruitful learning.



Thus, it has the primary goal of keeping the teachers open about to such an extent that the methods of instruction used are the best options for the children not only further the knowledge but also bring more meaning.

Table 10. *Significant differences on the perceived strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in Social Studies when respondents are grouped according to sex*

| Groups | N  | Median | df | $\chi^2$ (H value) | $\chi^2_c$ (Critical Value) | Significant Level | P- value | Decision  |
|--------|----|--------|----|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|
| Male   | 45 | 3.95   | 1  | 0.043              | 3.841                       | 0.05              | 0.835    | Accept Ho |
| Female | 55 | 4.05   |    |                    |                             |                   |          |           |

Table 10 determines the significant differences on the perceived strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in Social Studies when respondents are grouped according to sex. Since the H value of 0.043 is less than the critical value of 3.841 with a P-value of 0.835 at 0.05 level of significance, it failed to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is no significant difference in the responses of male and female respondents towards the effects of strategies used to enhance the critical thinking skills in their Social Studies classes.

The findings suggest that male and female students perceive the strategies for enhancing critical thinking in Social Studies classes in a similar way. This indicates that the strategies used are effective for both genders. Educators can confidently employ these strategies, knowing that they are perceived equally and are beneficial to students regardless of their gender.

These findings contradict the study conducted by Emman (2023) on students' critical thinking. The study reveals that the average score of female students was higher than that of male students. Female students tended to give more detailed and thorough answers than male students. Furthermore, female students have higher critical thinking skills than male students since the answers given by male students tend to be different from the topics in the questions.

It is evident that teachers can use these tactics as one of the main approaches to build critical thinking among learners. The educators who show the gender sensitivity in creating learning strategies in the classroom always open the channels through which male and female students will achieve the same learning objectives. The teachers who freely accept and align themselves with the diverse student body not only provide the students with the best pedagogy, but they also assist the learners in forming a habit of reason and in the process, become critical thinkers and analyzers in their own right. This on going of instructional techniques and strategies along with equity promotes the all-round growth and the best experiences of learners in the Social Studies domain.

Table 11. *Significant differences on the perceived strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in Social Studies when respondents are grouped according to grade level*

| Groups  | N  | Median | df | $\chi^2$ (H value) | $\chi^2_c$ (Critical Value) | Significant Level | P- value | Decision  |
|---------|----|--------|----|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|
| Grade 7 | 25 | 4.10   | 3  | 9.151              | 7.815                       | 0.05              | 0.027    | Reject Ho |
| Grade 8 | 25 | 4.25   |    |                    |                             |                   |          |           |
| Grade 9 | 25 | 4.10   |    |                    |                             |                   |          |           |
| Grade10 | 25 | 3.70   |    |                    |                             |                   |          |           |

Table 11 expresses the significant differences on the perceived strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in Social Studies when respondents are grouped according to grade level. Since the H value of 9.151 is greater than the critical value of 7.815 with a P-value of 0.027 at a 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that there is a significant difference in the responses of different grade level towards the effects of strategies used to enhance the critical thinking skills in their Social Studies classes.

The varying perceptions across different grade levels suggest there are distinct differences in how students at different grade levels view the strategies used to improve critical thinking skills in social studies classes. This implies the effectiveness of these strategies may vary depending on the students' grade level. Educators should adapt their teaching methods based on the grade levels of their students. What works well for one grade may not be as effective for another. By understanding these grade level differences, educators can design their teaching to better meet the needs and preferences of students at different stages of development.

Supporting this, Abrami et al. (2015) assert that proficient teaching strategies can enhance students' critical thinking skills across various academic levels and fields of study, whether they are general or subject specific. This reinforces the idea that teaching strategies need to be tailored to the academic level of students to maximize their effectiveness.

The significant differences suggested that what works effectively for one grade level may not necessarily be as impactful for another. That is an immediate indicator that educators need to adapt their teaching to the particular developmental stage and the corresponding educational needs of students at various grade levels. When student teachers take these differences into consideration, they can adapt their methods of instruction to make them relevant and effective for each respective grade level, thereby enhancing engagement opportunities and fostering deeper learning and worthiness in the development of critical thinking skills in Social Studies. Besides stressing ongoing assessments and changes to teaching methods, this focuses on adapting to the changing dynamics of students' needs as they march up grade levels. It finally provides a conducive atmosphere for ensuring that all students engage, thus becoming masters of academics and developing relevant critical thinking skills.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings discussed in this research, the following conclusion were drawn: Most of the respondents are in the age between fourteen to fifteen years old. Most of the respondents are female. The respondents are selected Junior High School students in the private school. Junior High School students in Eastern Quezon College Inc. agree that fostering discussion and debate as well as assessing and reflecting have the most significant effects in enhancing their critical thinking skills in Social Studies. The perception of the respondents on the strategies used in enhancing critical thinking skills in Social Studies when grouped according to age does vary, while on the sex does not vary, and on grade level does vary.

Based on the findings and conclusion in this study, the recommendations of the researcher made help the following: To the School Administrators, they may conduct trainings and seminars for different intervention strategies to integrate current events and issues into the classroom for the learners. To the Parents, they may monitor their children about using strategies to being aware on current events and issues to apply in the classroom. To the Teachers, they may provide activities that will involved the learners on integrating current events and issues so that learners will be aware on the current events and issues happening in their surroundings to enhance their critical thinking skills. To the Students, they may do some practices and be updated on the news aired on television and radio that will improve their awareness on current events and issues. To the Future Researchers, they may conduct a parallel study which gives more emphasis on strategies use in enhancing critical thinking skills of learners in Social Studies.

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