R546 Instructional Strategies for Thinking, Collaboration, and Motivation

Dr. Curtis J. Bonk

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Super Summary Paper

During my educational career in the social studies education department, I always hear about the critical thinking strategies in social studies classes. Moreover, educators in this field are also concerned with the idea of how to build this ability in the children’s minds. As a future academic in the social studies education, I wanted to study critical thinking in social studies classes in elementary and secondary schools for this course assignment. In order to find articles on this topic, I searched ERIC, EBSCO, and Google scholar by typing in “critical thinking in social studies classes.” The number of articles on this topic was not too many, and it was hard to find the relevant and high quality research articles from the list.

I summarized three articles that these were related to critical thinking in social studies classes. There are too many ways to teach critical thinking skills in social studies classes. One way to teach critical thinking is using technology such as the Internet and the Web tools. However, there are also teachers concerns that shape their instruction such as high stakes, examinations, and so on and so forth.

1. **Shiveley J. M. & VanFossen, P. J. (1999). Critical thinking and the Internet: Opportunities for the Social Studies Classroom. Social Studies; Jan/Feb99, Vol. 90 Issue 1, p42, 5p**

In this study, there was social studies teacher that he assigned his students to write a paper on their current topic- the Holocaust- in which students use the Internet as a primary source. While the teacher was grading his students’ papers, he realized how students had difficulties with using the Internet as a source even with his best students. The researcher in this article stated that for teachers, there were some path ways to overcome on this issue; one that refuse students access to the Internet, second was limit students’ access to the sites that he has to explain, and third was to teach students critical thinking skills. The researcher emphasized the importance of the third option by stating that all good teachers choose the third choice to build students critical thinking abilities to filter the information that comes from the Internet not to choose other two options that these were the easiest ways. Moreover, researcher stated that in the democracy, there must be the environment that free and independent decision making occur. And the receivers of the information must evaluate the sources. The researcher also emphasized the extra need on the evaluation of information that comes from the Internet. Given the importance of critical thinking skills, social studies teachers should also teach these skills to their students on the Internet.

In this article, in order to filter the mass information that comes from the Internet, social studies teachers should build students’ critical thinking skills with six criteria. These criteria were; authorship/source, objectivity/biases, validity of content, bibliography/reference links, currency, and quality of writing. Furthermore, there were specific questions under each criterion that students should ask to evaluate the information that comes from the Internet.

In sum, researcher stated the importance and the outcome of the applications of those criteria that students can understand the critical thinking skills and apply these skills to the other fields automatically. To me, as we are living in a technological environment that we somehow face this kinds of issues that this might be one way to teach critical thinking skills. As the democracy education is one of the major themes in social studies education that students should learn how the democratic citizen should act as a free and critical thinker in the social studies courses.

3**) Salam, S. & Hew, K. F. (2010). Enhancing Social Studies Students’ Critical Thinking through Blogcast and Socratic Questioning: A Singapore Case Study. International Journal of Instructional Media; 2010, Vol. 37 Issue 4, p391-401, 11p, 2 Charts**

In this article researchers stated the educational reform in Singapore that which wants students to be critical. As a conductor of this change, social studies course was implemented a compulsory in 2001. However, critical thinking tasks that students are learning in this course was hard in terms of the big number of class populations, and the class discussions were held with the small number of students. This difficulty leads the idea of using Web technology in social studies classes that all students can actively involve in the critical thinking process. Basically, the researchers in this study tried to investigate the role of blogcast with Socratic questioning on students’ critical thinking in social studies. In this article, researchers also explained the Socratic questioning and the Web tools such as blogs and podcasts.

In this case study, researchers applied pre-test and post-test to the selected 27 students in social studies class in a public school. First, students were taken the pre-test to see their levels of critical thinking prior to the lessons. Then, students were also taught about the use of blogcasts and podcasts. And in the third step, the instruction with the Web tolls began. After all, students were shown some information and brainstormed about the topic and uploaded it. In the next step, students were asked to write to their reflections to whatever they had uploaded with the Socratic questions. In the last step, students took post-test, and their critical thinking achievements were evaluated.

The researchers stated that those students’ critical thinking accomplishments in this study were improved with the blogcast with Socratic questioning. I think, there are several ways to teach critical thinking skills in social studies. The researchers in this study showed that Web based instruction are one the ways. Actually, the ways the teachers teach critical thinking skills depends on the educational system, curriculum, and students. Because, in this case study showed me that teachers should tie the instruction with the students’ needs and interest. And, students enjoyed in using such Web tools in their instruction.

1. **Baildon, M. C. & Sim, J. B.-Y. (2009). Notions of Criticality: Singaporean Teachers' Perspectives of Critical Thinking in Social Studies. Cambridge Journal of Education; Dec2009, Vol. 39 Issue 4, p407-422, 16p, 1 Chart**

This is a case study of critical thinking in social studies classes in Singapore. There was an educational reform in Singapore that was called *Thinking schools, learning nation* (TSLN). *Thinking schools* means in this reform that future generation are engaged in critical and creative thinking in educational institutions, and *learning nation* is the culture of thinking and lifelong learning that should be one of the highest goals of education. Also with these changes, secondary social studies was launched in 2001 was selected as a conductor for the national education. In this article, the history of social studies course was stated. Also the role of social studies curriculum in the reform in Singapore and its being as a front vehicle for the national education was emphasized. In general, the Singaporean students’ educational profile was drawn in terms of the history of the country and the changing society.

As the social studies was a new subject in the compulsory education of Singapore and a leading subject to conduct change, and the teachers’ role in this reform is described as civil servants to the nation and education. Social studies teachers were selected in this study to have their perspectives on critical thinking in classes. Teachers as the participants of this study reported that in the high stake examination environment it is hard for teachers to facilitate such critical thinking abilities. And their other concern was also about time.

The researchers in this article emphasized that the critical thinking in social studies classes in Singapore had some difficulties. Basically teacher participants reported that there were several difficulties in order to build a critical and creative thinking environment that these were “teaching critical thinking in an examination culture, political context and ‘out of markers’, and civil service and teacher agency” (Baildon, M. C. & Sim, J. B.-Y. , 2009, p. 413).

**Overview Articles**:

Using technology to increase critical thinking in social studies:

Shiveley J. M. & VanFossen, P. J. (1999). Critical thinking and the Internet: Opportunities for the Social Studies Classroom. Social Studies; Jan/Feb99, Vol. 90 Issue 1, p42, 5p

Salam, S. & Hew, K. F. (2010). Enhancing Social Studies Students’ Critical Thinking through Blogcast and Socratic Questioning: A Singapore Case Study. International Journal of Instructional Media; 2010, Vol. 37 Issue 4, p391-401, 11p, 2 Charts

Critical Thinking in Secondary Social Studies:

Alazzi, K. F. (2008), Teachers’ Perceptions of Critical Thinking: A Study of Jordanian Secondary School Social Studies Teachers. The social studies, November/December 2008, Vol. 99 Issue 6, p243-248, 6p

Baildon, M. C. & Sim, J. B.-Y. (2009). Notions of Criticality: Singaporean Teachers' Perspectives of Critical Thinking in Social Studies. Cambridge Journal of Education; Dec2009, Vol. 39 Issue 4, p407-422, 16p, 1 Chart

Salam, S. & Hew, K. F. (2010). Enhancing Social Studies Students’ Critical Thinking through Blogcast and Socratic Questioning: A Singapore Case Study. International Journal of Instructional Media; 2010, Vol. 37 Issue 4, p391-401, 11p, 2 Charts

Shiveley J. M. & VanFossen, P. J. (1999). Critical thinking and the Internet: Opportunities for the Social Studies Classroom. Social Studies; Jan/Feb99, Vol. 90 Issue 1, p42, 5p

Critical thinking in social studies class in Singapore:

Baildon, M. C. & Sim, J. B.-Y. (2009). Notions of Criticality: Singaporean Teachers' Perspectives of Critical Thinking in Social Studies. Cambridge Journal of Education; Dec2009, Vol. 39 Issue 4, p407-422, 16p, 1 Chart

Salam, S. & Hew, K. F. (2010). Enhancing Social Studies Students’ Critical Thinking through Blogcast and Socratic Questioning: A Singapore Case Study. International Journal of Instructional Media; 2010, Vol. 37 Issue 4, p391-401, 11p, 2 Charts

Critical thinking in social studies class in Jordan:

Alazzi, K. F. (2008), Teachers’ Perceptions of Critical Thinking: A Study of Jordanian Secondary School Social Studies Teachers. The social studies, November/December 2008, Vol. 99 Issue 6, p243-248, 6p

Other critical thinking in social studies

Ian, W. (2002), Challenging Students with the Tools of Critical Thinking. The Social Studies; Nov/Dec2002, Vol. 93 Issue 6, p257, 5p

John, F. (2006). History Detectives. Teaching Pre K-8; Oct2006, Vol. 37 Issue 2, p56-57, 2p, 1 Color Photograph

Lynn, B. (2010) Special section- Reflections on Social Studies methods, International Social Studies Forum; 2003, Vol. 3 Issue 1, p247-250, 4p

Thomas, L. (2010). Socializing Future Social Studies Teachers and K-12 Students: Whether, When, and Why. The Social Studies; Feb2010, Vol. 101 Issue 2, p69-74, 6p