

CULTIVATING CRITICAL THINKING AND REFLECTIVE SKILLS IN JOURNALISM THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOP LEARNING

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Abstract

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This study investigates the effectiveness of a workshop-seminar designed to forge and strengthen critical thinking skills among Grade 6 pupils through journalism activities. Critical thinking, defined as the ability to analyze, evaluate, and create reasoned judgments, is an essential competency for academic success and responsible citizenship. The seminar-workshop aimed to equip pupils with practical strategies to enhance their critical thinking abilities by engaging them in interactive, real-life journalism exercises. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 40 participants through reflective surveys and analyzed to identify the most impactful facilitation strategies and participants' areas for improvement. Findings reveal that student engagement, meaningful content, and facilitator delivery were key factors that contributed to improved critical thinking. Pupils reported increased confidence, creativity, and analytical skills, which they acknowledged as vital for applying journalism as a tool to positively influence their broader communities. The study concludes with a proposed Reflective Critical Thinking Cycle to guide future educational interventions. This research underscores the importance of interactive, context-based learning to foster critical thinking and advocates for the replication of such workshop-seminars to benefit larger pupil populations.



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Introduction

Pupils should be taught the best way possible in preparing them face the future. One of the things that teachers can teach do is to develop and improve pupils' critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is defined as the ability to analyze, evaluate, and create reasoned judgments. The lack of interventions on this regard may lead to failure. It is the responsibility of the teacher to transform pupils to become critical thinkers (Loy et al., 2019). Kalibo Pilot Elementary School in Aklan has conducted a seminar-workshop that would develop and improve the pupil critical thinking skills in journalism. To reinforce that critical thinking is an essential competency for academic success and

responsible citizenship. Teachers have the responsibility to develop and improve pupils' critical thinking skills, as the lack of interventions in this area may lead to failure. This seminar-workshop was attended by 40 Grade 6 pupils that poses to review strategies and techniques of the facilitators in conducting a workshop-seminar; improve pupils' critical thinking skills in journalism by attentively listening and actively participating in the seminar-workshop; and develop and apply the critical thinking skills as a journalism tool that is used to create creative thinking process and enhancing learning.

The quality of citizens depends on the quality of their education and quality of education besides other factors depends upon study habits and study attitude of the learners (Hussain A.C., 2006). This states that poor learning attitude and outcomes of pupils lead them unprepared to study. The importance of learning experiences shape and train pupils to be equipped with the knowledge they need in so many ways like solving a problem by utilizing different strategies and techniques. The lack of exposure to real life situations deprives pupils to perform well.

The teachers of Kalibo Pilot Elementary School, Aklan highly believed that learning does not only take place in class and should not always go by the book and this led to the conceptualization and conduct of the seminar-workshop. The importance of experiential practice emphasizes that learning is most effective when it is active and contextual. Studies show that learning is most effective when both writing and speaking are emphasized (Kuiper et al., 2017). This supports the need for hands-on, experiential methods. Therefore, this seminar-workshop, links the required skill set (critical thinking) to the domain of the intervention (journalism). According to Hannis (2012), critical thinking is fundamental in journalism education to foster responsible reporting and community engagement. Furthermore, the study's participants were exposed to tasks that developed their critical thinking skills through engaging with journalism and enabled them to encounter situations that could develop and improve their critical thinking skills; and by getting them involved and engaged in all learning-situational tasks pupils were able to realize the importance of thinking critically and its importance as an essential skill in journalism and in journalists (Hannis, 2012). By synthesizing the claims of Hannis (2012) and Kuiper et al. (2017), the study goes beyond stating that critical thinking is needed; it tests theoretically sound principles (active engagement, effective facilitation, and the integration of writing/speaking) within a practically implemented, school-led intervention.

The objectives of the study are to review the strategies and techniques used by the facilitators in conducting the workshop-seminar; to improve pupils' critical thinking skills in journalism; and to develop and apply critical thinking skills as a journalism tool that enhances creative thinking and learning. To address these objectives, the study establishes the need to develop and improve pupils' critical thinking skills, citing Loy et al. (2019). It contextualizes the study by mentioning the seminar-workshop conducted at Kalibo Pilot Elementary School, Aklan, which involved 40 Grade 6 pupils. The study's objectives include reviewing strategies, improving pupils' skills, and developing the application of critical thinking as a journalism tool. The rationale for the current study stems from the belief held by the teachers at Kalibo Pilot Elementary School that learning does not only take place in the classroom and should not always follow the textbook. Therefore, this study responds to the need to examine the impact of a practical, non-traditional intervention-the seminar-workshop-in which pupils encountered situations designed to develop and improve their critical thinking skills.

Literature Review

This literature review examines the necessity of cultivating critical thinking and reflective skills in journalism students and explores the effectiveness of experiential workshop learning methodologies

in achieving this goal, emphasizing active engagement, skillful facilitation, and the integration of writing and speaking.

I. The Foundational Importance of Critical Thinking and Reflective Skills

Critical thinking is recognized globally as a cornerstone skill, pivotal for academic success and essential for navigating the complexities of the contemporary world. Critical thinking is defined as the ability to analyze, evaluate, and create reasoned judgments. It is purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, and guides belief and action. It is crucial for informed decision-making, democratic engagement, and effective problem-solving (Machost and Stains, 2023). The modern educational landscape necessitates a shift away from traditional teaching models, which often prioritize rote memorization and passive knowledge reception. Traditional methods may produce students incapable of applying critical thinking skills effectively in academic pursuits or personal lives (Golden, B. 2023). Mora-Ramirez (2024) highlight the role of teachers in cultivating critical thinking, which inherently involves reflection. Consequently, it is an essential competency for academic success and responsible citizenship. Given this imperative, teachers have the responsibility to develop and improve pupils' critical thinking skills, as the lack of interventions in this area may lead to failure. Educators must cultivate good thinking habits, as unguided thinking can be biased, distorted, or uninformed.

Reflective skills are intrinsically linked to critical thinking. Reflective thinking is conceptualized as the process of making informed and logical decisions on educational matters, followed by assessing the consequences of those decisions (Anselmo et al., 2025). This active process is regarded as reflective thinking, where learners actively apply information to new situations, testing their knowledge against real-world problems. Reflective practices provide the opportunity to step back and contemplate the best strategies to achieve goals, thereby enhancing critical thinking (Dewey, 1993).

II. The Necessity of Experiential and Active Learning in Journalism

The sources strongly support the use of experiential and active pedagogical approaches over passive methods, particularly within disciplines requiring high levels of practical application, such as journalism and public relations. Journalism and public relations students benefit from active learning approaches, as their professional field requires skills like problem-solving, creative and critical thinking, and information synthesis for decision making. This real-world experiential activities help students develop their skills (Anselmo et al., (2025). It is “increasingly important to prompt reflective thinking among journalism students to support them in their transition from learners to practitioners in a dynamic environment that demands autonomy and innovativeness.”

Hannis (2012) specifically addresses enhancing students' critical thinking in journalism education using historical primary journalism texts, which implies experiential learning approaches in journalism education.

Experiential learning, defined by learning through real-world experiences and hands-on activities, plays a vital role in higher education by fostering critical thinking, developing practical skills, and achieving deeper comprehension. This methodology encourages students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information in real-time situations. This type of hands-on approach directly addresses the call to examine the impact of a practical, non-traditional intervention like a seminar-workshop designed to develop critical thinking skills. The utility of this focus is reinforced by the finding that critical thinking is essential for employee development and highly valued in the workplace. Therefore, engaging students in experiential activities prepares them for the challenges of their future careers. Campo & Villarruel-Diaz (2024) discuss active pedagogy methodologies that engage students actively, aligning with experiential learning principles to foster critical thinking and student

engagement, thus enabling them to experience real-world application, active engagement, and reflective practices to promote critical thinking and problem-solving.

III. Strategies for Cultivating Critical Thinking and Reflection in Workshops

The objectives of the study are to review strategies, improve critical thinking in journalism, and apply critical thinking to enhance creative thinking and learning that are addressed by synthesizing literature on active engagement, communication integration, and effective facilitation.

A. Active Engagement, Collaboration, and Communication

Active learning strategies, inherent in experiential workshops, promote deep learning, critical thinking, and higher-order skills like analysis and evaluation, contrasting sharply with traditional lectures.

1. Active learning involves students being actively engaged in real-world tasks, such as internships or research projects, which enhances retention and application of knowledge. Collaborative learning, involving groups working toward a common academic goal, promotes critical thinking through the active exchange of ideas, discussion, clarification, and evaluation of others' ideas. Student feedback indicates that methodologies most effective for developing critical thinking include Debates, Project-Based Learning (PBL), practices in real contexts, doing research, cooperative learning, and case studies. Song, Y., & Cai (2024) highlights active learning like problem-based learning and inquiry in higher education case studies, supporting deep learning and higher-order skills. Anselmo et al., (2025) examines active engagement via real-world tasks like research projects and internships, alongside collaborative methods such as debates, PBL, cooperative learning, and case studies, which boost retention, idea exchange, and higher-order skills like analysis.

2. Studies show that learning is most effective when both writing and speaking are emphasized (Kuiper et al., 2017). Providing opportunities for dialogue and discussion is crucial for improving critical thinking skills. Discussions guided by teacher-posed questions, often in whole-class and small-group settings, have been found to be particularly successful. The efficacy of integrating specialized writing instruction into subject teaching has been empirically demonstrated, showing statistically significant growth in students' use of technical writing features, supporting the need for hands-on, experiential methods.

B. Facilitation, Explicit Instruction, and the Role of the Instructor

The transformation of learning environments requires instructors to shift their role from transmitting information to acting as a facilitator for learning, stimulating student thinking through real-world problems.

By focusing on practical, theoretically sound principles like active engagement, effective facilitation, and the integration of writing/speaking, the study aims to move beyond merely stating the need for critical thinking. The approach described by Hannis (2012) in teaching journalism history utilizes Document-Based Questions (DBQs), which require students to critically assess primary journalism texts, thus testing the application of critical thinking. Hannis's approach specifically addresses challenges like students struggling to think critically or avoiding close reading. Strategies implemented included dedicated sessions to sharpen critical thinking skills, where criticality was defined explicitly, requiring students to develop reflective practice and metacognition by means of reflective thinking, critical analysis, and putting thoughts into action are key characteristics of teacher reflection. The process of reflection often involves examining underlying assumptions and beliefs. For students, reflection involves critically analyzing

experiences and connecting them to theoretical concepts. Metacognition - the awareness and control of one's cognition is central to critical thinking and self-assessment. Pedagogical methods such as structured discussions reinforce metacognitive capacity, allowing students to systematically evaluate evidence and refine their reasoning. Moreover, Machost & Stains (2023) overs reflective practices as a primer, highlighting metacognition, self-assessment, and structured discussions to evaluate evidence and refine reasoning.

C. Developing Critical Thinking as a Tool to Enhance Creative Thinking

A key objective is to develop and apply critical thinking skills as a journalism tool that enhances creative thinking and learning. Critical thinking is one of the four Cs of 21st-century skills, alongside communication, collaboration, and creativity. Critical thinking and creative thinking are highly interdependent. It involves logical decisions made after the analysis and evaluation of information, applying accepted principles to decisions, and assessing creative ideas for practicality. The core cognitive skills of critical thinking interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation are crucial here. It aims to create a new or unique idea and does not necessarily take into account accepted principles. When combined, critical thinking and problem solving (which leads to creative thinking) are necessary for analysis, asking questions, getting answers, and finding solutions in a rapidly changing global market. Hannis (2012) applies critical thinking in journalism education via primary texts, enhancing creative analysis and practical decision-making.

The studies show and support that workshops incorporating active pedagogy, explicit instruction in critical thinking skills (like those necessary for source evaluation and textual analysis in journalism), and environments encouraging dialogue and reflection are highly effective in developing critical thinking and its partner competency, creative thinking. The need to improve critical thinking skills, (Loy et al., 2019), reinforces that these skills are vital practical competencies sought for professional success. Also, Huais-Inacio & Portocarrero-Gutiérrez (2023); & Gómez (2025) support critical thinking development through logical evaluation and creative synthesis in dynamic contexts.

Theoretical Synergy

The study is anchored on Experiential Learning Theory and Reflective Thinking Theory. This pedagogical approach places a strong emphasis on practical, hands-on learning to build students' critical thinking and practical skills, and Reflective Thinking Theory provides the framework for how they internalize and refine those skills (conscious analysis, evaluation, and subsequent adjustment of their beliefs and actions based on the experience). Dewey (1933) and Choy (2012) form the core theoretical anchors for Reflective Thinking Theory, emphasizing reflection on experience for critical skill refinement through analysis and adjustment. Dewey (1993) highlights foundational text restating reflective thinking's role in the educative process, where learning arises from reflecting on experiences rather than experience alone. Choy (2012) positions reflective thinking in teaching as a precursor to critical thinking, operationalizing the action-reflection cycle for internalization and metacognitive adjustment. The study effectively operationalizes this synergistic approach by emphasizing how learning emerges from the action-reflection cycle, embodying the idea that we learn not merely from experience, but from reflecting on that experience.

Methodology

Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

This study employed qualitative research design to comprehensively assess the impact of the workshop-seminar on developing critical thinking skills among Grade 6 pupils. The qualitative component utilized open-ended questions to gain deeper insights into participants' experiences. The study reported its

findings by grouping the qualitative feedback into three main research questions (Q1, Q2, and Q3), suggesting these were the primary prompts given to the participants. Q1 focuses on Strategies Liked Most “What are the strategies the pupils like most in the Critical Thinking Skills in Journalism Seminar-Workshop?” ; Q2 focuses on Areas for Participant Improvement “What do pupils want to improve after learning those strategies from the facilitators?”; and Q3 focuses on Application to Community through Journalism “How could pupils apply the critical thinking skills to a much bigger community through journalism?” Therefore, the study’s operational structure is descriptive qualitative study.

Participant Selection

A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select 40 Grade 6 pupils who attended the workshop-seminar. Participants were chosen based on their voluntary participation and availability during the data collection period. The sample represented a balanced mix of genders and diverse academic abilities to ensure comprehensive feedback. The study defines the inclusion criteria used to select the 40 participants.

- The participants selected were 40 Grade 6 pupils who were attendees of the seminar-workshop designed to develop and improve critical thinking skills in journalism at Kalibo Pilot Elementary School in Aklan.
- Participants were chosen based on their voluntary participation.
- Their selection was also contingent on their availability during the data collection period.
- To ensure comprehensive feedback was obtained, the final sample was selected to represent a balanced mix of genders and diverse academic abilities.

These criteria ensured that the selected Grade 6 pupils were willing, present, and reflected a variety of backgrounds necessary for assessing the impact of the experiential workshop-seminar

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the institutional review board. Informed consent was secured from the pupils' parents or guardians, and assent was obtained from the pupils themselves. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity; no personal identifiers were recorded in the data. Additionally, they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. The research adhered to ethical standards in education research, ensuring respect, privacy, and protection of all participants throughout the study.

Findings

The qualitative data were coded based on the following procedures and data coding process:

- The researchers, who participated in the research methodology and data entry began transcribing and repeatedly reading the participants' raw written responses from the open-ended reflections and questions. This stage ensures a deep understanding of the language, context, and overall experiences expressed by the pupils.
- The raw data were broken down into smaller units of meaning. A descriptive code was assigned to each unit that captures a specific idea or concept such as participants’ written explanation. For example, a quote like: “This interactive and hands-on seminar-workshop enhanced my critical thinking and boosted my confidence as a student” would be assigned codes such as “interactive learning”, “confidence boost,” and “enhanced critical thinking.”
- The initial codes would be reviewed and grouped together based on shared meaning or relationship to the research questions (e.g., strategies liked most, areas for improvement, application to community). Codes clustered around interactive lessons would form the basis of a broader theme.
- The final themes would be clearly defined and named to accurately reflect the core findings, linking them back to the research objectives.
- The emergent themes would be checked against the entire data-set to ensure they accurately reflect

the pupils' original statements.

The goal of this coding process could transform the varied, descriptive pupil responses into coherent categories that illustrate the impact of the seminar-workshop on critical thinking development.

Theme 1: Strategies Preferred by Participants

Question No. 1: What are the strategies the pupils like most in the Critical Thinking Skills in Journalism Seminar-Workshop?

- **Pupil Engagement:** This was the most favored strategy. Participants described the learning tasks as interactive, interesting, and creatively engaging, which significantly enhanced their involvement and critical thinking. Eleven pupils specifically highlight the interactive nature and high engagement. For example, one pupil stated that the interactive and hands-on seminar-workshop enhanced their critical thinking and boosted their confidence. Active pedagogy via engagement and facilitation enhances involvement, autonomy, and judgment, supporting interactive and encouraging delivery (Campo & Villaruel-Diaz, 2024).
- **Meaningful Content:** This was identified as the second most effective approach used by the facilitator. Participants valued the content for being meaningful, exemplary, and well-thought of. The content strategy helped participants understand and differentiate the various stages of critical thinking, including reasoning, evaluation, problem-solving, decision-making, and analysis. This approach was key in encouraging independent thinking, fostering personal autonomy, and promoting well-reasoned judgment. According to Hannis (2012), journalism students favor interactive primary text analysis, facilitator-guided discussions, and self-insights for criticality, matching pupil insights, delivery style with examples, and confidence-building via questioning.
- **Pupil Insights:** Ranked third among the most effective strategies was the use of pupil insights. This strategy gained effectiveness largely due to the engaging relationship established between the facilitator and the participants (Campo & Villaruel-Diaz, 2024). The participants' insights acted as both their self-assessment and feedback mechanism, contributing significantly to the enhancement of their critical thinking skills. Specific insights reported included learning to be confident, creative, critical-minded, and learning how to ask questions and answer questions correctly and wisely. One pupil noted the impact on self-awareness: "The seminar-workshop awakened my self-awareness. I recognized the true meaning of being human."
- **Facilitator's Delivery Style:** This strategy was highly appreciated, helping participants enjoy and actively engage with the seminar. Participants noted that the facilitator's use of clear examples, encouragement, and active encouragement boosted their confidence and participation. Descriptive feedback categorized the delivery as fun, interactive, informative, and included actual, real-life experiences. The facilitator's role was crucial, as providing examples and justifications makes the delivery more persuasive, assisting participants in interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, and reflecting on their work (Anselmo et al., 2025).

Theme 2: Areas for Participant Improvement

What do pupils want to improve after learning those strategies from the facilitators?

Regarding areas participants wished to improve following the seminar, several key themes emerged. Ten participants aimed to cultivate more positive thinking, while others focused on improving problem-solving skills, decision-making, practical social interactions, learning styles, and career readiness. A smaller, though notable, group sought to reduce negative outlooks on life.

Following the seminar, participants recognized several key areas they wished to focus on for personal development and self-improvement:

- Many participants aimed to cultivate more positive thinking.
- Others focused strongly on improving problem-solving skills and decision-making abilities.
- Participants also expressed a need to better their learning styles and skills related to career readiness.
- A focus on enhancing practical social interactions in daily life was also noted.
- A smaller group sought to reduce negative outlooks on life.

These reflections highlight that participants agreed on the necessity to improve broader aspects such as life perspective, social engagement, decision-making abilities, and career development. These findings highlight that participants prioritized improving aspects such as life perspective, social engagement, decision-making abilities, and career development, aligning critical thinking development with broader personal growth. This aligns with research that links critical thinking development with broader personal growth, including optimism and effective social collaboration (Choy, S. C., 2012). The capacity for reasoned judgment supports not only academic progress but also interpersonal and emotional skills necessary for holistic development. This is also supported by Gómez, D. L. J. (2025) as he believes that the development of critical thinking in higher education, which can be related to basic education, is influenced by a multi-factorial interaction of physiological, psychological, sociocultural, technological, and educational factors. Holistic approaches that address these dimensions are essential for fostering autonomous and reflective learners capable of tackling contemporary challenges.

Theme 3: Application of Critical Thinking to Community through Journalism

How could pupils apply the critical thinking skills to a much bigger community through journalism?

Recognizing Critical Thinking as a Foundational Tool

Participants perceived critical thinking skills as essential tools in journalism. The seminar-workshop introduced the pupils to the concept of critical thinking and how it can benefit the community, particularly in decision-making, judgment, evaluation, and assessment processes. One primary objective of the seminar was to help pupils develop and apply these skills as a journalism tool to enhance learning.

Upholding Accuracy and Objectivity

A key finding was the participants' recognition that critical thinking enabled them to engage in responsible reporting and civic action. They understood that the skill set allowed them to discern facts from misinformation.

Several pupil reflections reinforced this theme, detailing specific applications:

“I can use this in journalism because I need to be more critical when I hear something. It gives me the ability to determine if something is a fact or not through critical thinking”.

Participants learned that these skills help them write reliable content based on facts, which can benefit the larger society. Pupils noted that critical thinking requires them to write responsibly and objectively. One participant affirmed, “I learned how to write accurately and objectively”. This is supported by Ocampo et al. (2023) whose study mentions that students identify preferred strategies like interactive engagement, meaningful content delivery, facilitator styles, and self-insights as fostering critical thinking skills, aligning with pupil preferences for hands-on workshops.

Fostering Positive Community Influence

Participants recognized the power of journalism as a tool for societal impact. They understood that the application of critical thinking should lead to positive influence within their communities: One pupil learned how to write critically about topics that can positively influence a broader community. Participants also acknowledged that the reflective skills learned can be readily applied in responsible journalism, positively impacting their communities, families, and themselves.

Furthermore, the pupils recognized that developing critical thinking improved their ability to engage with information critically, noting: “I will be more involved in learning because I now know how to assess and evaluate critical questions”. Participants acknowledged the necessity for disciplined reflection when covering issues affecting their community. In his study, Rahmi et al. (2019), he highlights that inquiry-based learning enhances critical thinking through active problem-solving, evaluation, and reflection, supporting experiential seminar approaches over traditional methods.

These insights underscored the participants’ acknowledgment of the power of journalism as a tool for societal impact, requiring accuracy, objectivity, and disciplined reflection when covering issues affecting their community. This insight supports Hannis’s (2012) argument that critical thinking is fundamental in journalism education to foster responsible reporting and community engagement.

The content strategy was identified as the second most effective approach used by the facilitator during the seminar-workshop. Content refers to the delivery of information aimed at an audience through a chosen medium, and in this case, it formed the core substance of the entire seminar activity. This approach helped participants understand and differentiate the various stages of critical thinking, including reasoning, evaluation, problem-solving, decision-making, and analysis. By employing this strategy, the facilitator was able to encourage independent thinking, foster personal autonomy, and promote well-reasoned judgment in both thought and action.

Ranked third among the most effective strategies was the use of pupil insights. This approach gained effectiveness largely due to the engaging relationship established between the facilitator and the participants. The participants’ insights acted as both their self-assessment and feedback mechanism, contributing to the enhancement of their critical thinking skills.

The fourth strategy employed was the facilitator’s delivery style, which helped most participants enjoy and actively engage with the seminar. The facilitator’s role is crucial as it significantly influences the seminar’s overall success. Providing examples and justifications during presentations makes the delivery more persuasive, helping participants better understand the material. When facilitators can effectively influence attendees, it encourages participants to develop and refine their critical thinking abilities. This can be assessed by posing questions related to the content and inviting participants to write and share their reflections publicly. Delivery is essential in fostering critical thinking because it assists participants in interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, and reflecting on their work, with questions ranging from simple to complex. Bhuttah, Xusheng, Abid, and Sharma (2024) found that inclusive leadership (a supportive role) significantly mediates the relationship between innovative pedagogical approaches (which foster critical thinking) and student critical thinking. This highlights that a leadership style that creates a supportive and diverse learning environment is essential for innovative teaching methods to flourish and positively impact student critical thinking

As part of the workshop, each participant considered their best answers and discussed them with their teams before presenting their responses. The facilitator’s support and encouragement enhanced their confidence, participation, and engagement. Golden (2023) observed that developing and maintaining student motivation and engagement was a critical precursor to students developing critical thinking skills, aligning with the idea that an enjoyable, engaging style is foundational. The successful use of her planning tool resulted in students experiencing greater engagement and greater depth and reflection in their answers

Writing was also incorporated as part of the intervention and contributed significantly to the development of participants’ critical thinking skills, supporting the idea that learning is most effective when both writing and speaking are emphasized (Kuiper et al., 2017).

Participants understood how to apply critical thinking skills to benefit a wider community through

journalism. They recognized that critical thinking enabled them to:

- Discern facts from misinformation.
- Write responsibly and objectively.
- Assess and evaluate critical questions.

Use these skills as tools in journalism to write reliable content based on facts that benefit the larger society. Participants acknowledged the power of journalism as a tool for societal impact, emphasizing the need for accuracy, objectivity, and disciplined reflection when covering issues affecting their community. One pupil stated, “I learned how to write critically about topics that can positively influence a broader community.”

Furthermore, selecting the most suitable strategies through reflective thinking can greatly aid in achieving the specific goals and objectives of the intervention (Henn-Reinke & Chesner, 2014). This is highly relevant to the findings of the Kagaba, A. G. (2025) that implementing strategies such as critical thinking skills instruction significantly improves learners’ abilities to analyze information critically, which plays a vital role in effective educational reform aimed at developing more informed, independent thinkers in school environments. These areas clearly highlight participants' priorities for becoming more critical and reflective thinkers. Reflecting on the second inquiry, it is evident that participants agreed on the necessity to improve aspects such as life perspective, social engagement, decision-making abilities, and career development. Moreover, active learning methodologies, particularly problem-based learning and inquiry, are highly effective in enhancing critical thinking of learners, especially through their capacity to engage them actively in analyzing complex problems and constructing arguments (Song & Cai, 2024). Generally, a person equipped with strong critical thinking skills is more likely to:

- Approach challenges with optimism;
- Collaborate effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds;
- Understand and adapt to various learning styles;
- Employ multiple strategies to solve problems;
- Pursue ongoing professional development to advance their career; and
- Avoid negative thinking while striving for harmonious relationships with self, family, and community.

Discussion

The findings of this qualitative study demonstrate the significant impact of an experiential seminar-workshop designed to cultivate critical thinking skills among 40 Grade 6 pupils through journalism activities. The data gathered from participant reflections revealed that student engagement, meaningful content, and facilitator delivery were key factors that contributed to improved critical thinking. The discussion below explores these findings, connecting them to the study’s objectives, established literature, and theoretical framework.

Reviewing Facilitator Strategies and Techniques (Theme 1)

The study's first objective was to review facilitators' strategies in the workshop-seminar. Participants favored active engagement methods and meaningful, contextual content. Pupil engagement was the top strategy, making tasks interactive and stimulating critical thinking, aligning with active learning theories. Meaningful content helped participants grasp critical thinking stages, fostering independent judgment. The facilitator’s delivery was praised for being fun, clear, and relatable, with examples and writing activities enhancing understanding and critical thinking development.

Focusing on Areas for Participant Improvement (Theme 2)

Participants' reflections post-seminar emphasized critical thinking's role in holistic personal growth beyond academics, targeting improved life perspective, social engagement, decision-making, and career

readiness. Key aspirations included fostering positive thinking, better problem-solving, practical social skills, and reduced negativity. Research supports this, showing critical thinking enhances optimism, collaboration, reasoned judgment, and interpersonal skills for overall development.

Applying Critical Thinking to Community through Journalism (Theme 3)

The third objective developed critical thinking skills as a journalism tool to boost creative thinking and learning; participants viewed critical thinking as vital for responsible reporting and civic action. They gained abilities to distinguish facts from misinformation, evaluate questions objectively, and produce reliable, society-benefiting content, aligning with Hannis (2012) on critical thinking's role in journalism education for community impact. The seminar's success rested on Experiential Learning Theory's hands-on activities and Reflective Thinking Theory's framework for analyzing and refining skills.

Critical thinking is characterized as a reflective and self-corrective process that involves reasoning according to defined criteria and being sensitive to the content and context of information. Research demonstrates that critical thinking skills significantly enhance an individual's capacity to assess and evaluate information accurately and objectively. This cognitive skill set necessitates interpreting and critically analyzing observations, communications, and various information sources. Moreover, it requires the ability to scrutinize underlying assumptions, pose relevant questions, and deduce implications, which collectively contribute to reasoned argumentation and problem-solving. Critical thinkers recognize that in many situations, the most effective way to determine what to believe or how to act is by employing this reasoned and reflective approach, utilizing it as appropriate (Loy M.C et al., 2029).

Ultimately, the researchers developed a Reflective Critical Thinking Cycle to serve as a practical framework guiding individuals in the systematic development and application of critical thinking. The concept of a "reflective Critical Thinking Cycle" is empirically validated as a practical framework for systematic development, largely through its foundation in Experiential Learning Theory and Reflective Thinking Theory, particularly when implemented using active, problem-solving methodologies like those found in the study's context of experiential workshop learning in journalism.

To provide a practical guide for this process, the researchers developed the Reflective Critical Thinking Cycle. This cycle serves as a framework to guide individuals in the systematic development and application of critical thinking, encouraging pupils to practice reflective practices such as: examine, evaluate, contemplate, actualize and enforce, and analyze and refine their actions. This claims supports a study of Taggard, G.L., et al. (2020) which promotes reflective thinking among teachers. This model systematically transforms a student's reaction to a challenge from an automatic response into a deliberate, evidence-based, and critically analyzed plan of action.

Theoretical and Systematic Validation of the Cycle

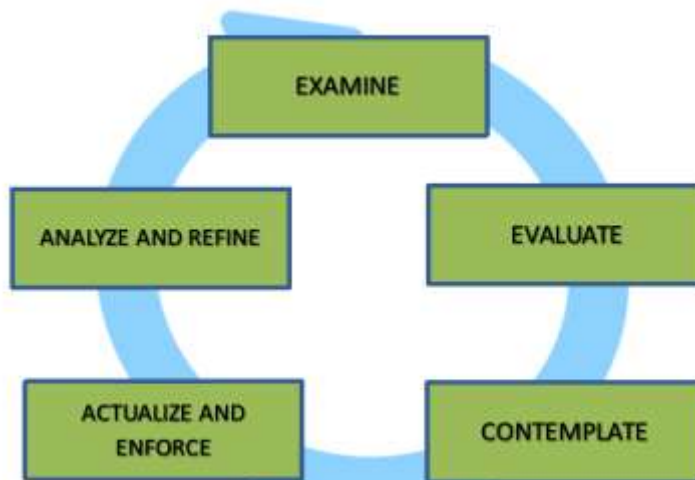


Figure 1: Bombaes' Reflective Critical Thinking Cycle

The study further contributes a Reflective Critical Thinking Cycle developed by the author, which offers a practical model to guide the integration of these skills into real-world contexts. The figure shows the reflective critical thinking cycle developed by the researchers serves as the GPS system for the experiential workshop. The “experiential workshop” is the vehicle providing the real-world road and driving practice. Thus, helping students to be more engaged in a systematic process that leads to critical reflection which encourages students to practice reflective practices such as examine, evaluate, contemplate, actualize and enforce, and analyze and refine (Dewey, J., 1993). More over, reflective thinking does not just encourage thinking; it provides scaffolding (like a map with distinct analytical points) that systematically transforms a student’s reaction to a challenge from an automatic response into a deliberate, evidence-based, and critically analyzed plan of action. This claims are supported by Machost, H., & Stains, M. (2023).

Reflection In-Action in the case of Kalibo Pilot Elementary School, Aklan Pupils

Reflective practice involves engaging in critical and thoughtful examination of one's experiences. Critical thinking, as described by Farrell (2006), largely depends on logic and reasoning, incorporating analysis and evaluation. Reflective thinking, often called “thinking yourself” or Heidegger's “meditative thinking,” involves introspectively analyzing personal experiences and skills to identify areas needing change or improvement, thus fostering growth (Farrell, 2006). This process makes it easier to spot areas for development. Pupils should understand that becoming a critical thinker is most effective when combined with core values that promote discipline. Moreover, these reflective steps can help pupils build their discipline, virtues, and higher-order thinking skills, which are vital in larger community contexts (Choy, 2012; Bombaes et al. 2021).

Conclusion

This seminar-workshop has had a profound impact on the pupils' lives overall. With the support of the facilitator and the institution, the pupils were introduced to the concept of critical thinking and how it can benefit the community, particularly in decision-making, judgment, evaluation, and assessment processes. Through this seminar-workshop, pupils learned to express themselves with greater discipline and responsibility, guided by critical thinking principles. The study highlights the significant factors that influence pupils’ engagement, emphasizing the necessity of a skilled and qualified facilitator to ensure the workshop’s success. For a facilitator to be effective, they must possess qualities that allow them to deliver the material convincingly and positively influence the audience. Anselmo (2025), highlights that disciplines face distinct challenges in developing critical thinking, but interdisciplinary and discipline-specific pedagogies tailored to these contexts can mitigate these challenges and promote critical analytical skills among learners; and this a challenge that must be done and established by the teachers. Also, implementing active pedagogy methodologies, such as interactive discussions and experiential learning, are highly effective in increasing pupil engagement and consequently enhance critical thinking development in basic education settings (Campo & Villarruel-Diaz, 2024). Through this, it can reframe traditional education to focus on inquiry, reflection, and active participation significantly impact students' capacity to develop critical thinking skills, moving beyond rote memorization (Huaire-Inacio,2023). Most importantly, the reflective model proposed by the researchers offers a practical framework for developing and enhancing pupils' critical thinking skills, which they can readily apply in responsible journalism-positively impacting their communities, families, and themselves. The successful implementation of these steps depends largely on pupils' commitment to applying what they have learned

. Furthermore, the researchers strongly recommend to build a strong pupil-teacher relationships and creating supportive learning environments are fundamental pre-conditions for fostering critical thinking in basic education, especially in overcoming pupils' initial binary thinking mindset and encouraging engagement with ambiguity and complexity (Golden, 2023); and conducting similar seminar-workshops at least twice a year, given their observed benefits for participants. Therefore, the teacher's role is crucial in cultivating critical thinking; effective strategies include fostering a questioning culture, encouraging autonomous inquiry, and providing feedback that promotes metacognitive awareness and reflection (Mora-Ramírez, 2025; Wassenaar, T.M., et al. 2025).

Co-Author Contribution

Authors 2 and 3 carried out the fieldwork, prepared the literature review and overlooked the whole article's write up. Author 4 wrote the research methodology and did the data entry. Author 1 carried out checking the overall quality of the paper by improving, enhancing, and enriching its content.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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