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Project-Based Learning and Students' Critical Thinking in History and Political Education in Selected Secondary Schools in Goma Division, Mukono District, Uganda

Akareut Esther Rachael & Harriet Ludigo
Makerere University, Uganda
Email: estherrachaelakareut@gmail.com/harrietludigo@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The study was carried out in secondary schools in Goma Division, Mukono District, Uganda. It examined the connection between students' critical thinking in history and political education and project-based learning (PBL). It specifically looked at the relationship between students' critical thinking abilities and PBL's collaborative activities, student autonomy, and real-world linkages. A quantitative correlational design was used for the investigation. Based on the recommendations of Robert V. Krejcie and Daryle W. Morgan, a sample of 205 participants was chosen from four schools utilising stratified and basic random selection approaches from an accessible population of 440 Senior Three and Senior Four children in 10 schools. A Likert-scale questionnaire was used to gather the data, which were then examined using Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics. The results showed a strong positive correlation between students' critical thinking abilities, real-world linkages ($r = 0.609$, $p < 0.001$), student autonomy ($r = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$), and collaborative PBL activities ($r = 0.323$, $p < 0.001$). In general, PBL showed a somewhat favourable correlation with students' critical thinking ($r = 0.540$, $p < 0.001$). In order to foster competency-based and inquiry-oriented learning, the study indicates that PBL greatly aids in the development of higher-order thinking abilities in history education and suggests enhancing cooperative, autonomous, and real-world project activities.*

Keywords: *Project-based learning, Collaborative activities, Student autonomy, Real-world connections, Critical thinking skills*

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1. Introduction

A learner-centered, problem-oriented teaching methodology built on projects is known as project-based learning (PBL) (D'Ambra, 2014). In this study, PBL is conceptualized as a pedagogical strategy that engages learners in the exploration of historical issues through collaborative learning processes, including peer-to-peer interaction, group presentations, and written group reports. By encouraging group inquiry, shared accountability for learning, and active engagement, these activities foster the growth of higher-order thinking.

Larmer et al. (2010) define critical thinking as an intellectually disciplined process that involves the conceptualization, application, analysis, synthesis, and assessment of knowledge received from observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication to direct belief and action. The ability of students to interact

critically with historical material is referred to as critical thinking in this study. In particular, analysis involves examining historical sources, identifying causal relationships and consequences, recognizing potential bias, and deconstructing complex historical events to generate informed interpretations.

In Uganda's reformed secondary school curriculum developed by the National Curriculum Development Centre, History and Political Education are learning areas integrated into a single subject. This integration is intended to promote learners' understanding of historical developments, governance systems, and civic responsibilities, while encouraging the application of historical knowledge to contemporary social and political contexts.

Students gain critical thinking and problem-solving abilities through project-based learning that are appropriate for the fifth generation and pertinent to the demands of the actual world. A project-based learning curriculum helps students build 21st-century skills, which is necessary for its successful implementation in the classroom. PBL gives students multiple chances to develop their problem-solving, higher-order thinking, and teamwork abilities (Ehlers, 2024).

The systematic application of inquiry-oriented instructional approaches gained prominence in the 1960s, particularly at institutions such as McMaster University in Canada, where innovative student-centred learning models were introduced in higher education (Gorghiu, 2021). Even though these early developments were more directly linked to problem-based learning, they had a significant impact on the development of project-based approaches that prioritize inquiry, teamwork, and the practical application of knowledge to real-world circumstances. By the 1980s, these learner-centred methods had gradually permeated kindergarten, primary, and secondary education in the US and Canada. Project-based learning was being utilised more frequently as a tactic to foster students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork abilities (Lim et al., 2023).

Similarly, studies in South Africa reveal that effective implementation of PBL requires significant restructuring of classroom practices and a shift from traditional teaching approaches to constructivist methods. Such transformation often demands changes in teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, which can be difficult to achieve without adequate pedagogical training and institutional support (Nxasana et al., 2023). In Uganda, the teaching of history at the Ordinary Level has undergone several reforms aimed at improving educational quality and relevance. Prior to the 1980s, the education system largely followed the British model, where history was taught as a chronological narrative of events and assessment focused primarily on end-of-term and national examinations. This content-driven and teacher-centred approach emphasized memorization rather than the development of analytical and practical skills (Eriya, & Serunjogi, 2023).

1.1 Problem Statement

Given the growing complexity of social, political, and technological surroundings, critical thinking development is often considered a fundamental goal of modern education. Critical thinking equips learners with the ability to interpret information, analyze evidence, evaluate arguments, and regulate their reasoning during academic tasks (Manalo & Chua, 2020). These competencies also support creativity, collaboration, and effective communication in problem-solving contexts (Zhang,. 2023). According to this viewpoint, Project-Based Learning (PBL) has been acknowledged for fostering collaboration, tying classroom instruction to real-world situations, and enhancing students' critical thinking abilities (Ehlers, 2024; Gray, 2021; Alt et al 2023).

In many secondary schools, the development of critical thinking in history and political education is still restricted despite these possible advantages. Research shows that factual recollection is still prioritized above higher-order cognitive functions including analysis, application, and evaluation in national exams at the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) level (Kidega, 2024). Similarly, classroom practices in many Ugandan schools remain predominantly teacher-centered and rote-oriented, limiting opportunities for inquiry and interpretation (Twahirwa, Ntivuguruzwa & Shyiramunda, 2021). Yet meaningful engagement with history requires learners to analyze historical evidence, synthesize information, and consider multiple perspectives through inquiry-oriented approaches (Savich, 2008). When instruction focuses largely on memorizing dates, events, and personalities, students may perceive history as less relevant or engaging (Lim, 2021).

Although the Competency-Based Curriculum was introduced to promote higher-order thinking, its implementation remains uneven, with many teachers continuing to emphasize memorization (Eriya & Serunjogi, 2023). In several secondary schools in Mukono District, learners still struggle to analyze and evaluate historical tasks despite the use of collaborative strategies such as group discussions, as reflected in UCE–UNEB Transition Results (2024). Moreover, concerns persist that current assessment approaches inadequately capture

learners' depth of historical understanding (Oduro, Muganga & Parker, 2024). These challenges highlight the need to examine instructional approaches that can more effectively foster critical thinking. Therefore, this study looks into how PBL could improve students' critical thinking skills in political education and history in a few Goma Division secondary schools.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided our investigation:

1. To investigate the impact of collaborative Problem-Based Learning (PBL) activities on the development of critical thinking skills among students in history and political education.
2. To evaluate the role of student autonomy within PBL frameworks in fostering critical thinking skills in the context of history and political education.
3. To examine how integrating real-world connections in PBL activities enhances students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

The study examined three null hypotheses to see if significant components of project-based learning (PBL) are related to students' critical thinking in political and historical education. H1 states that there is no significant relationship between cooperative PBL assignments and students' critical thinking skills. H2 indicates that there is no meaningful relationship between students' autonomy in PBL and their critical thinking skills. According to H3, there is no significant relationship between PBL projects' real-world linkages and students' critical thinking skills. These theories served as a foundation for evaluating empirically whether PBL's fundamental activities aid in the growth of higher-order thinking abilities.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework illustrates the presumed relationships among variables within a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this research, Project-Based Learning (PBL) constitutes the independent variable, while students' critical thinking represents the dependent variable. PBL is conceptualized through three key dimensions: collaborative learning (peer-to-peer) interaction, group presentations, and written group reports, student autonomy (self-directed learning, decision-making, and reflection), and real-world connection (engagement in relevant and authentic learning tasks).

The dependent variable, critical thinking is operationalized through three cognitive processes: analysis, application, and evaluation. Engagement in project-based learning activities is expected to stimulate these higher-order thinking processes by encouraging learners to investigate problems, interact with peers, and apply knowledge in meaningful contexts (Chu, Nnam & Faizefu, 2018).

Accordingly, the theoretical framework suggests that students' critical thinking abilities are developed through organized engagement in PBL activities. Figure 1, which shows the flow of impact from project-based learning to students' critical thinking outcomes, illustrates the proposed links between these constructs.

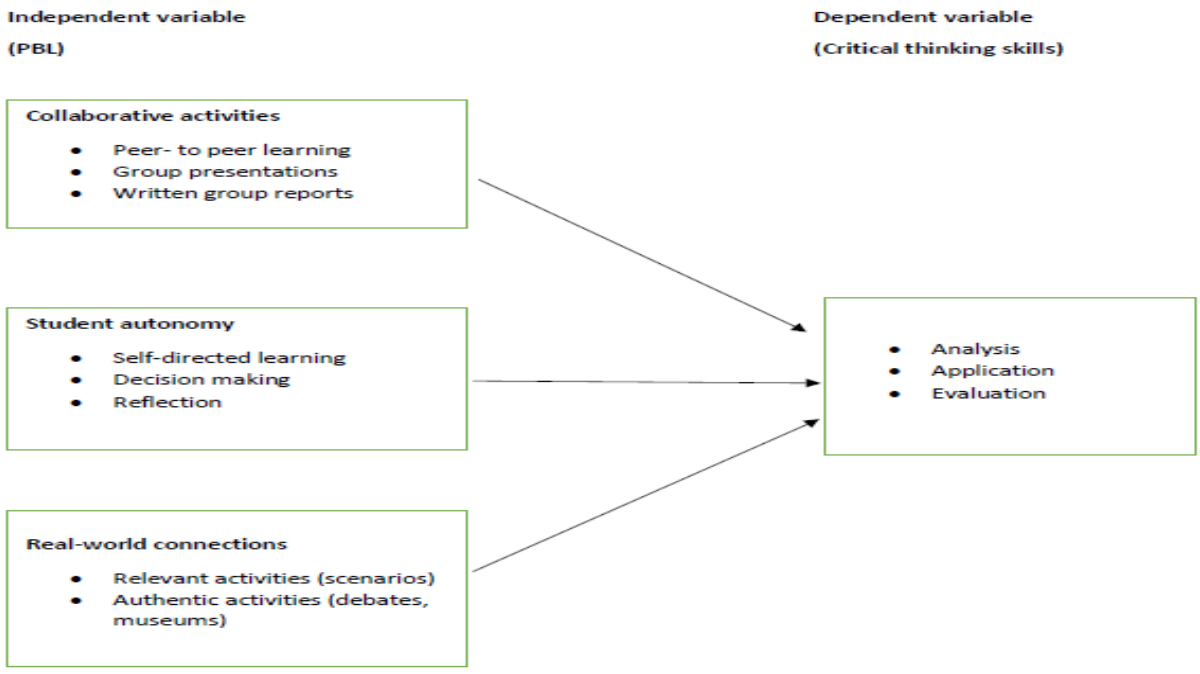

Figure 1: Links between constructs

2. Literature Review

2.1 Collaborative PBL activities enhancing students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.

It is becoming more widely acknowledged that critical thinking is an essential skill for successful engagement in modern knowledge economy and democratic societies (Zhang, Guan, & Hu, 2024),. The persistent predominance of teacher-centered instructional methodologies limits the development of critical thinking abilities in many classrooms, despite its accepted relevance. For instance, Saputra et al. (2021) found that accounting students in Indonesia were rarely supported in developing critical thinking skills because instruction was largely lecture-based and focused on the transmission of knowledge. Although this finding emerged from the field of accounting education, it reflects a broader trend across several disciplines where pedagogical practices tend to prioritize content coverage rather than the development of higher-order thinking and learner autonomy.

Collaborative learning approaches have been widely proposed as effective mechanisms for fostering critical thinking. Cooperative models such as the jigsaw strategy encourage interaction, shared responsibility, and collective knowledge construction among learners (Ebrahim & Lisa, 2022). Similarly, Schoenberger-Orgad and Spiller (2014) argue that structured group discussions and teamwork create opportunities for learners to articulate ideas, challenge assumptions, and engage in reflective reasoning. However, much of the empirical evidence supporting collaborative approaches originates from science, technology, or business-related disciplines. Consequently, the extent to which such approaches effectively support critical thinking within humanities subjects such as history and political education remains insufficiently examined, particularly in African educational contexts.

Scholars also make an important distinction between problem-based learning and project-based learning in relation to learner autonomy and cognitive engagement. Problem-based learning generally involves presenting students with predefined problems that they explore through guided discussion and inquiry (Sierra, 2018). In contrast, project-based learning enables learners to identify and investigate authentic problems drawn from their own experiences and social contexts (Guo, Saab, Post & Admiraal, 2020). Deeper cognitive engagement and the growth of higher-order thinking abilities like analysis, assessment, and synthesis are linked to this increased degree of autonomy (D'Ambra, 2014). However, some detractors contend that the quality of task design, teacher facilitation, and institutional support

elements all of which are frequently unevenly distributed throughout educational systems are crucial to PBL's efficacy.

Empirical studies further indicate that collaborative PBL activities can enhance student engagement and cognitive participation. Jang et al. (2016) and Skinner et al. (2008) demonstrate that students are more actively involved in learning when they are provided with complex and meaningful tasks supported by teacher guidance. Motivation and learner commitment have also been identified as key factors influencing the effectiveness of collaborative PBL in developing transversal competencies, including teamwork, communication, and critical thinking (Torrijo, Ortigosa & Villagra., 2021). For PBL to achieve these outcomes, learning activities must be carefully structured to incorporate authentic problems, sustained inquiry, expert guidance, and meaningful peer collaboration (Barlow & Brown, 2020).

2.2 Student autonomy in PBL fostering students' critical thinking skills in history and political education

It is often acknowledged that a vital component of project-based learning (PBL) and a crucial ingredient in encouraging students' active engagement with knowledge is student autonomy. According to Mustamin, et al (2000), PBL enables students to take more responsibility for their education by establishing objectives and researching topics that align with their interests. In a study of a Grade 10 English as a Foreign Language class in Colombia, Agudelo and Morales-Vasco (2019) discovered that students who were first thought to be disengaged became more responsible and cooperative after taking part in PBL activities, which supports this viewpoint. While this result suggests that learner autonomy can increase student engagement, there is little information in the study regarding whether these gains also apply to the growth of higher-order cognitive abilities like critical thinking.

Similarly, Lamer (2010) highlights the importance of student voice and choice in project-based learning, arguing that projects that are overly pre-structured and allow minimal learner input may diminish students' motivation and limit opportunities for deeper cognitive engagement. His case study of a student-led environmental project in San Diego demonstrates that allowing learners to select topics and design project activities can foster critical thinking and other 21st-century skills. However, both studies were conducted in contexts that differ significantly from many secondary schools in developing countries. Consequently, there remains limited empirical evidence on how student autonomy within PBL influences critical thinking in resource-constrained educational settings, particularly in history and political education in Ugandan secondary schools.

2.3 Real-world connections within PBL activities enhancing students' critical thinking skills in history and political education

Integrating real-world connections into project-based learning (PBL) is widely recognized as essential for fostering students' higher-order thinking skills. Maguth et al. (2019) note that traditional social and political structures can often alienate learners, thereby highlighting the need for curricula that promote active engagement. Similarly, Gray (2021) advocates for history instruction organized around "world questions," which encourage learners to engage in critical evaluation, argumentation, and collaborative problem-solving. In the Netherlands, Van Straaten, Wilschut, and Oostdam (2019) identify pedagogical strategies tracing historical developments, linking past and present, and exploring enduring human issues that align closely with PBL principles. Larmer and Mergendoller (2010) argue that PBL fosters autonomy, curiosity, and practical problem-solving by allowing learners to generate questions, make decisions, and collaborate on meaningful projects. While evidence supports PBL's effectiveness in technologically advanced contexts, there is limited research on its impact in resource-constrained environments, particularly in Ugandan secondary schools teaching history and political education.

2.4 Literature Gap

While there is growing evidence that project-based learning (PBL) can improve students' critical thinking, there is still a dearth of research in a number of important areas. Empirical studies by scholars such as Zhang, Lim, and Van Straaten primarily examine the contribution of PBL to critical thinking within vocational and technical education contexts. Consequently, comparatively little attention has been directed toward humanities-oriented subjects such as History and Political Education, leaving an important disciplinary gap. In addition, much of the available evidence originates from studies conducted outside the African context. The dominance of international research limits understanding of how PBL influences critical thinking in Ugandan secondary schools, where curriculum structures, pedagogical traditions, and learning environments differ. Additionally, critical

thinking has rarely been studied through the integrated aspects of analysis, assessment, and application in earlier research. This study provides a unique conceptual viewpoint by using constructivism as its guiding theoretical lens instead of alternatives like connectivism. Accordingly, the research contributes new evidence on how PBL can foster critical thinking in History and Political Education within Ugandan secondary schools.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design, Population and Sample size

Using a quantitative correlational research approach, the study investigated the relationship between students' critical thinking skills in political education and history and project-based learning (PBL) (Ellis & Levy, 2009). 'O' Level students from ten secondary schools in Goma Division, Mukono District, comprising four government-aided and six private schools, made up the target population (Mukono District Education Report, 2025). Senior Three and Senior Four students were chosen as the units of analysis due to their prior exposure to project-based learning activities within the curriculum. The accessible population comprised 440 students. A sample of 205 pupils from four secondary schools was chosen using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table to determine sample size. Participants were selected from Senior Three and Senior Four classrooms, where history is required and students are expected to show higher-order thinking abilities relevant to the study as candidates and semi-candidates for national exams.

3.2 Sampling

Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proportional representation across school types and class levels. First, schools were grouped into government and private categories, and two schools were randomly selected from each group, giving every school within a stratum an equal chance of selection. Within the chosen schools, students were further stratified by class level (Senior Three and Senior Four). Simple random sampling was then applied within each stratum to select participants, ensuring that all students had an equal opportunity to be included. Using this method, a total of 205 students were randomly selected to complete the study questionnaire.

3.3 Instrument of the Study

A structured survey questionnaire with closed-ended questions that directly related to the study's variables was used to gather data. Students' opinions about the connection between project-based learning (PBL) techniques and critical thinking abilities in history and political education were recorded using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). After securing permission from school authorities, the questionnaire was self-administered to the 205 students selected from the participating schools. The use of standardized items enabled comparability across participants and supported quantitative analysis.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

3.4.1 Data Quality Assurance and Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the questionnaire's internal consistency and reliability. Coefficients of ≥ 0.70 were obtained from pilot testing and subsequent reliability analysis in IBM SPSS, showing acceptable reliability (Creswell, 2018; Ishtiaq, 2019). Expert review was used to establish content validity, with experts assessing each item's applicability to the study's goals. A threshold of 0.75 was deemed appropriate when calculating the Content Validity Index (CVI). Pre-testing in a comparable secondary school allowed for refinement of items before administering the main survey.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The researcher upheld rigorous ethical standards throughout the study by prioritizing the rights and dignity of all participants while maintaining integrity in the research process. Data collection was conducted with the utmost care, emphasizing informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and respect for privacy.

Informed consent was obtained by clearly communicating the study's purpose to participants, ensuring that their involvement was both voluntary and intellectually informed. This process enabled respondents to make a knowledgeable choice regarding their participation.

To safeguard anonymity, the identities of participants were rigorously protected, with measures in place to prevent any linkage between personal identities and their responses. Additionally, confidentiality was strictly maintained to foster a secure environment for participants to share their views without concern for their privacy. These ethical considerations were fundamental to the

integrity of the research and contributed to its overall reliability and validity.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Statistics for critical thinking skills

Table 1 presents descriptive data of students' reported critical thinking skills in political education and history based on Likert-scale responses. The study uses the mean and standard deviation to summarize the overall level of agreement and the range of responses from the students. The items are categorised into three critical thinking dimensions analysis, application, and evaluation for the sake of clarity. The standard deviation shows the degree of response variance, whereas the mean represents the overall trend of students' opinions for each statement. Before performing any inferential analysis, these descriptive statistics provide a summary of students' involvement with several facets of critical thinking.

Table: 1 Composite Descriptive Statistics for the Critical Thinking Construct

Statistic	Value	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval	Description
Mean	4.05	0.17	3.72 – 4.38	This represents the overall mean score for the critical thinking construct across all five items, indicating that students generally exhibit high levels of critical thinking.
Median	4.16	–	–	This represents the median of the critical thinking scores, indicating that half of the students scored above and half scored below this value.
Standard Deviation	0.39	–	–	Indicates moderate dispersion of responses around the mean.
Variance	0.15	–	–	Shows the average squared deviation from the mean, reflecting variability in students' responses.
Minimum	3.41	–	–	The lowest mean score among the critical thinking indicators.
Maximum	4.28	–	–	The highest mean score among the critical thinking indicators.
Range	0.87	–	–	The difference between the maximum and minimum mean scores.
Interquartile Range	0.16	–	–	Represents the spread of the middle 50% of the distribution.
Skewness	-1.43	0.91	–	Indicates a negatively skewed distribution, meaning responses tend to cluster toward higher levels of critical thinking.
Kurtosis	2.10	2.00	–	Suggests a slightly peaked distribution compared to a normal distribution.

With an overall mean score of 4.05 (SD = 0.39), the composite descriptive statistics demonstrate that students demonstrated comparatively high levels of critical thinking. The true population mean is expected to lie within this range, according to the 95% confidence interval (3.72–4.38). The majority of responses were clustered at the higher end of the scale, indicating substantial agreement with the critical thinking items, according to the negative skewness (-1.43). A somewhat peaked distribution with considerable response clustering around the mean is indicated by the kurtosis value of 2.10. Overall, these findings imply that students generally believe they are exhibiting high critical thinking abilities when completing historical learning assignments.

4.2 Correlation of students 'critical thinking skills on Project-based learning (PBL)

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson product–moment correlation to examine the relationship between project-based learning (PBL) practices and students' critical thinking skills in History and Political Education. Composite mean scores were calculated for the three PBL dimensions collaborative activities, student autonomy, and real-world connections and these were correlated with students' critical thinking scores, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' Critical Thinking Scores

Variable	r-value	p-value
Collaborative PBL activities vs Critical thinking skills	r=0.323	p<0.001
Student autonomy in PBL vs critical thinking skills	r=0.412	P=<0.001
Real-world connections in PBL vs Critical thinking skills	r=0.609	p=<0.001
PBL vs Critical thinking skills	r=0.540	p=<0.001

The results showed statistically significant positive relationships between students' critical thinking skills and every aspect of problem-based learning (PBL) that was looked at. Notably, a weak but significant association ($r = 0.323$, $p < 0.001$) was found between critical thinking and collaborative PBL activities, indicating that more teamwork in project assignments improves analytical and evaluative abilities. According to Chua and Manalo (2020), collaborative inquiry methods, such as project-based learning and PBL, greatly enhance students' critical thinking and reasoning abilities, especially in the areas of analysis, assessment, and synthesis. This study confirms that peer interactions during project work lay a foundation for deeper reasoning and interpretation of historical issues.

Moreover, student autonomy demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with critical thinking ($r = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that greater learner autonomy in project planning is associated with enhanced higher-order thinking abilities. Nishat, (2024) similarly found that student-driven inquiry within PBL fosters deeper understanding and cognitive development. Additionally, Tran, (2023) noted that in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, PBL cultivates learner autonomy, leading to increased engagement, self-directed learning, and critical thinking. Students who had the freedom to choose project topics and manage their tasks exhibited higher levels of reasoning, problem-solving, and analytical thinking. Thus, this study underscores the value of autonomy in project work, enabling students to take ownership of their learning and engage critically with historical content.

A strong link was found between critical thinking and real-world connections in PBL ($r = 0.609$, $p < 0.001$). This aligns with Ehlers (2024), who emphasized that engaging students with real-world problems fosters critical thinking by necessitating analysis, evaluation, and reasoning through complex situations. Although Ehlers focused on higher education, these principles are equally applicable to secondary education, as engaging with authentic problems enhances reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Overall, a moderate association ($r = 0.540$, $p < 0.001$) was found between PBL activities and students' critical thinking skills, suggesting that using PBL strategies more widely can successfully encourage critical thinking in students.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This study looked at how project-based learning (PBL) helped learners in a few secondary schools in Goma Division, Mukono District, Uganda, strengthen their critical thinking abilities in history and political education. The findings provide empirical evidence that key PBL features collaborative learning, student autonomy, and authentic real-world connections are significantly linked to higher levels of students' critical thinking.

First, collaborative PBL activities were found to positively influence students' critical thinking by creating dialogic learning environments in which learners interrogate historical issues, exchange perspectives, justify arguments, and evaluate alternative viewpoints. Such collaborative engagements promote deeper cognitive processing and reflective reasoning.

Second, the growth of critical thinking was found to be significantly predicted by student autonomy. Giving students the chance to organise assignments, make choices, and take ownership of their education encourages independent research and critical thinking.

Third, incorporating real-world historical and political contexts into project tasks demonstrated the strongest association with critical thinking outcomes. Authentic, contextually grounded learning experiences increase the relevance of historical knowledge and encourage students to apply analytical skills to contemporary societal issues.

Students' critical thinking skills were positively and significantly correlated with collaborative PBL activities ($r = 0.323$, $p < 0.001$), student autonomy ($r = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$), and real-world connections ($r = 0.609$, $p < 0.001$), according to statistical analysis, which further supported these associations. Notably, real-world contextualization exhibited the strongest relationship, indicating that the authenticity of learning tasks plays a particularly influential role in promoting higher-order thinking.

Overall, the results support PBL's pedagogical usefulness as a learner-centered teaching strategy that can change history and political education classrooms from places where material is taught to ones that encourage inquiry, analysis, and problem-solving. By combining collaboration, learner autonomy, and actual historical research, PBL fosters the development of critical thinking skills that are essential for informed citizenship and active participation in contemporary democracies.

5.2 Recommendations

The following suggestions are put forth in light of the study's findings:

1. *Capacity Building for Educators*: To address the challenges posed by limited prior exposure to Problem-Based Learning (PBL) methodologies in some schools, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), and school administrators initiate capacity-building workshops for History and Political Education teachers. This initiative should particularly target schools with scarce instructional resources to ensure equitable implementation of PBL practices for all students.
2. *Fostering Community Partnerships*: In light of the insufficient learning materials and limited access to enrichment activities, schools should establish collaborative partnerships with local communities, museums, archives, and civic institutions. These partnerships can facilitate authentic, cost-effective real-world learning experiences that actively promote inquiry and critical thinking.
3. *Encouraging Collaborative Learning*: Educators are encouraged to incorporate more collaborative projects within the History and Political Education curriculum. This approach will enhance teamwork skills and stimulate critical discussions among students.
4. *Promoting Student Agency*: It is crucial to provide learners with opportunities to direct their own learning through participation in decision-making processes during project activities. This autonomy will significantly contribute to the development of their critical thinking skills.
5. *Integrating Contemporary Contexts*: Educators should infuse contemporary issues into project activities in History and Political Education. By engaging students with relevant current events, this integration fosters cognitive engagement and encourages them to draw connections between historical contexts and present-day scenarios.
6. *Designing Autonomy-Focused* Curriculum: Curriculum developers are advised to create history lessons that enhance student autonomy, allowing learners ample time to plan, research, and present their findings. This student-centered approach can lead to deeper learning outcomes.
7. *Supporting Real-World PBL Initiatives*: School administrators should actively support real-world oriented PBL initiatives, such as community-based projects, debates on current issues, and historical simulations, including museum visits. These activities can enrich the educational experience and provide practical applications of historical knowledge.

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