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Teaching Practices of Social Studies Teachers in Facilitating Self-Directed Learning of Senior High School Students in the Philippines

John Erwin Prado Pedroso, PhD. and Lester B. Magno

West Visayas State University, Iloilo City, 5000, Philippines
johnerwin.pedroso@wvsu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

The after-effects of the recently concluded COVID-19 pandemic have drastically altered the teaching behaviors of educators which posed a greater challenge in delivering quality education during the unprecedented paradigm shifts in the academe. This study aimed to describe the teaching practices of social studies teachers to facilitate self-directed learning of senior high school students. This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design. The informants were five (5) senior high school teachers who were identified using a purposive sampling technique. Data were gathered with the use of a duly-validated written interview guide distributed online via e-mail and Facebook messenger. Through the use of a thematic approach in analyzing the data, there were three (3) major themes emerged, which include (1) developing students' self-management, (2) establishing students' relationship skills, and (3) nurturing students' decision-making capacity. The findings also included six (6) meaningful categories such as (1) direct instruction, (2) skill-based activities, (3) collaborative discussion, (4) interactive learning activities, (5) research-based activities, and (6) individualized activities. Teaching practices of social studies teachers play a crucial role in ensuring self-directed learning experiences for students. Students were provided with opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in practical contexts, solve problems, make rational decisions, and engage in tasks that mirror authentic situations.

Keywords: teaching practices, social studies, self-directed learning

1. Introduction

Interest in studies related to the teaching practices of teachers utilizing self-directed learning activities has been growing over the past couple of years. Teaching practices as educational strategies enable students to engage in a productive learning process to achieve the desired learning objectives, necessary skills, and the application of knowledge to real-life situations (Vidergor, 2023). On the other hand, self-directed learning is an academic character trait in which students actively participate in the learning process (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). Previous research has revealed that emphasizing self-directed learning inside the classroom improves student engagement and focus on the learning process (Davari Torshizi & Bahraman, 2019). Moreover, teachers applying self-directed learning activities inside the classroom report better academic performance of students wherein the teacher acts as a facilitator of learning rather than teaching the concepts in a passive manner (Daumiller, Fasching, Dickhäuser, & Dresel, 2023).

While the benefits of self-directed learning as an approach to teaching have been discussed extensively, previous studies have not examined the self-directed learning activities applied by Filipino senior high school social studies teachers in the context of face-to-face post-pandemic learning set-up. Ratten (2023) explains that the transition of educational institutions to the post-pandemic era has incurred sudden educational changes affecting teachers' teaching strategies and students' learning techniques. Both educators and students struggled to meet their respective demands causing teaching and learning issues hampering the objective of delivering quality education in the post-pandemic time (Neuwirth, Jović, & Mukherji, 2020). With this, it is crucial to describe self-directed learning activities applied by social studies teachers since it enables a more active learning process amidst the paradigm shifts caused by the global health crisis (Eringfeld, 2021). Karatas & Arpaci (2021) has explained that embedding self-directed learning activities in the teaching practices of educators inside the classroom is essential since it emphasizes more on the idea that students must be the drivers of their learning.

This study aims to describe the teaching practices of social studies teachers in facilitating self-directed learning of senior high school students. Discovering the practices that teachers impose to capacitate productive collaboration among students and the teaching initiatives teachers provide in shaping students' analytical and problem-solving skills are also the focus of the study. Consequently, it was presumed that social studies teachers use self-directed learning activities to develop students' relationship skills and utilize research-related activities in strengthening students' decision-making capacity. Hence this study is undertaken.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design. This implies gaining insights into people's actions, motivations, and subjective experiences (Leigh-Osroosh, 2021). Likewise, this study is anchored on constructionist epistemology and Naturalistic Inquiry methodology.

2.2 Informants

The informants of this study were five (5) social studies teachers who were identified using a purposeful sampling technique. Inclusion criteria were used to determine whether the informants are eligible to participate in this study. The inclusion criteria are as follows: a) the informant must be a natural-born Filipino; b) the informant is a licensed professional teacher; c) the informant is a senior high school social studies teacher; d) currently teaching in the senior high school on the academic year 2022-2023 during the conduct of this study.

The informants' profiles are presented in Table 1. Out of five (5) Filipino senior high school teachers, three (3) of them are teaching in a public school located in the Province of Iloilo while the remaining two (2) informants are currently teaching in a private institution found in the City of Iloilo. Furthermore, two (2) of them are designated as Teacher III, one (1) Teacher II, one (1) Social Studies Subject Area Coordinator, and one (1) Academic Teaching Personnel. To preserve the anonymity of the informants, pseudonyms were used by the researcher.

Table 1. Informants of the Study

Informant	Natural born Filipino	Licensed Professional teacher	Senior High School Social Studies Teacher	Teaching in the Academic Year 2022-2023
Tom	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gabby	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marlon	✓	✓	✓	✓
Christoff	✓	✓	✓	✓
Louise	✓	✓	✓	✓

2.3 Data Gathering Instrument

This study utilized a researcher-made written interview guide distributed online via e-mail and Facebook messenger. Likewise, it was validated by panel of experts in qualitative research and pilot-tested among two (2) non-participant social studies teachers. The instrument was divided into two (2) parts. Part one (1) contains the personal information of the informants and a letter of consent to confirm their participation. Part two (2) are the open-ended questions for the informants to write their responses relating to the teaching practice that facilitate self- directed learning of the students.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed online via e-mail and Facebook messenger. Time limit in answering the form was not imposed. As soon as the informants finished answering the online form, they submitted their responses and Google Forms automatically saved the informant's data. After which, the accumulated responses were downloaded and was ready for data analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The responses of the informants collected via Google Forms were downloaded and coded manually. Clarke and Braun's thematic analysis was utilized in order to attain knowledge and understanding regarding the teaching practices of o social studies teachers in facilitating self-directed learning of senior high students.

2.6 Reliability

In order to make sure that the outcomes of this qualitative research study were reliable, informant validation, utilization of verbatim or direct quotations, member checking, textual descriptions, and rigorous data collection were applied. The procedures adhered by this study will be published to serve as basis for other researchers conducting studies that may or may not be in congruence to this particular study.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Since informants' right to make well-informed decisions were highly considered, a letter was provided which introduces the researcher and the title of the research, as well as the purpose of the study. A consent form was signed by the informants emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation as an informant in the study. It also ensures that they intentionally agreed to participate in this research study. Moreover, the researcher preserved the anonymity of answers and confidentiality of any personal information provided by the informants in the questionnaire.

Results

The teaching practices of social studies in facilitating self-directed learning of senior high school students are classified into three (3) major themes: teaching practices that (1) develop students' self-management, (2) establish students' relationship skills, and (3) nurture students' decision-making capacity. The results also included six (6) significant categories: (1) direct instruction, (2) skill-based activities, (3) collaborative discussion, (4) interactive learning activities, (5) research-based activities, and (6) individualized activities.

Instructional methods and strategies implemented to hone students' self-management inside the classroom are (a) direct instruction, and (b) skill-based activities. On the other hand, teaching strategies implemented to strengthen the relationship skills between students are divided into (a) collaborative discussion, and (b) interactive learning activities. Lastly, to make sure that students develop their critical thinking and analytical skills, teaching strategies implemented include (a) research-based activities and (b) individualized activities.

Self-Management

There were two (2) explicit categories determined concerning the teaching practices that facilitate the development of students' self-management and these are (1) direct instruction, and (2) skill-based activities.

Direct Instruction

Direct instruction is a traditional type of teaching strategy that is centered on a structured and systematic way of instruction. The teacher plays a crucial role in directly delivering the lessons accompanied by reinforcements to make sure that students get the most out of the discussion. This teaching strategy also enables teachers to provide support to effectively manage the performance and behaviors of students. The teaching practices that informants use for direct instruction were classified into three (3) subcategories namely (a) Implementing Multimedia Lectures, (b) Providing Class Rules, and (c) Utilizing Affirmations.

- *Implementing Multimedia Lecture*

The informants believe that lectures must be incorporated with elements of multimedia since it enhances student engagement by maximizing students' attention in the discussion. It also facilitates comprehensive understanding for students since this teaching strategy caters to students' various learning styles by presenting the lesson in different modalities. Moreover, Teacher Gabby stated that

"...I conduct lectures accompanied with a multimedia presentation to sustain the focus, especially of my TVL students who are not academically inclined."

Hence, informants enrich the delivery of their lesson by presenting the content in a more relatable and engaging way.

- *Providing Class Rules*

Class rules were also recognized by the informants as an effective strategy for students to develop self-management skills. Students establish clear expectations since class rules serve as a guideline of how they are expected to act and behave inside the classroom. It also encourages the practice of self-discipline among students which leads them in making rational and responsible choices. Teacher Christoff had the same sentiments by saying that:

"...I employ class rules and made it clear to them so that they will be guided on their actions and responses inside the classroom."

It is clear from the statement of Teacher Christoff that class rules enable students to feel a sense of accountability and that their actions and behavior inside the classroom have corresponding consequences.

- *Utilizing affirmations*

Affirmations are incorporated by the informants to hone students' growth mindset. A positive growth mindset enables students to believe in their capacity to overcome challenges and strive to become better each day. By recognizing and assuring students' competencies, efforts, and strengths, they become more confident in themselves and it also fosters their willingness to learn new things and continuously strive to improve themselves. As Teacher Christoff has says:

"Affirmation is of great help to make students aware that I am with them..."

He further states:

"...it is crucial that students must feel that they are valued and their efforts are being recognized for them to function productively."

Additionally, motivating and affirming students' efforts not only help in building their self-confidence but also allows them to perceive themselves positively and sustain a healthy self-image.

Skill-based Activities

Infusing skill-based activities inside the classroom are deemed significant in making sure that students effectively manage the way they behave and learn inside the classroom. These are instructional strategies that focus on developing specific competencies or skills of students. These types of activities are essential in providing students the opportunity to practice specific skills and eventually master them. The skill-based activities that the informants utilize to develop students' self-management are classified into one (1) subcategory which is (a) employing interactive group activities.

- *Employing interactive group activities*

Informants noted the importance of employing interactive group activities since it enables students to collaborate and interact with their fellow learners. Consistent student interaction fosters communication which eventually builds teamwork and capacitates students in solving problems as a group. Furthermore, students' active engagement is advocated especially in discussing and sharing ideas with their fellow learners. Moreover, these activities allow students to reflect on their ability to manage themselves while being engaged with other students. In this regard, Teacher Marlon shared his insights by saying that "…engaging learners through group activities helps them become more aware not just of their environment but also of how they act towards their fellow learners… these helps hone learners' self-management." Interactive group activities encourage not only cooperation but also mutual support among students.

Relationship Skills

There were two (2) explicit categories determined in identifying the instructional strategies used by the informants to establish students' relationship skills namely (1) collaborative discussion, and (2) interactive learning activities.

Collaborative Discussion

Students exposed to collaborative activities are more adept at establishing strong interpersonal connections with their fellow learners. Aside from building upon each other's ideas, students can share their diverse perspectives enriching the construction of knowledge while sustaining firm rapport with other students. The collaborative discussion was classified into three (3) subcategories and included (a) Implementing Round Table Discussion, (b) Applying Think-Pair-Share, and (c) Utilizing Growth Communities.

- *Implementing Round Table Discussion*

Participating in round table discussions can improve students' ability to effectively communicate with others by listening attentively and responding thoughtfully. Informants also highlighted that this activity allows students to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the ideas leading them to convey empathy to the sentiments of their fellow students. In congruence with this, Teacher Tom mentions:

"...group discussions can promote a deeper understanding of a topic and increase long-term retention."

Moreover, Teacher Louise asserts

"...it promotes active listening which is important in establishing positive relationships among learners."

With that being said, round table discussions are essential for students to create strong and compassionate relationships among themselves.

- *Applying Think-Pair-Share*

Another cooperative learning strategy used by the informants is the "Think-Pair-Share" scheme. What makes this strategy unique is that it allows students to share their insights dynamically with their pair and eventually within a small group. Students gain a diverse set of knowledge for it allows a comprehensive exploration of insights acquired from other students. As Teacher Gabby has states:

"... I employed think-pair-share and many other activities that call for collaborative efforts among them."

Aside from providing students a platform to share their knowledge regarding the discussion, think-pair-share teaches students to confidently express their ideas while working cooperatively with others.

- *Utilizing Growth Communities*

Students are expected to work together and collaborate to achieve a common goal. Teacher Marlon emphasized the importance of growth communities by saying:

"...growth communities are utilized to any academic or nonacademic activities of the school to maximize collaboration among learners even outside the classroom."

Informants also utilize growth communities for group reporting. This means that informants utilize growth communities to foster mutual trust and friendship among the students which makes learning more enjoyable and highly engaging. Furthermore, this learning scheme enables students to work as a team triggering a sense of belongingness among its members. In this way, accomplishing learning tasks are efficiently done by the students.

Interactive Learning Activities

Teaching practices encourage students not just to become passive recipients of knowledge and information but also to participate actively in learning activities being implemented inside the classroom. With this, the interactive learning activities applied by the informants were classified into two (2) subcategories namely (a) Administering Simulation Activities, and (b) Facilitating Group Debates.

- *Administering Simulation Activities*

Informants mobilize their teaching and learning strategies by infusing real-life situations into the activities that they carry out inside the classroom. Simulation activities allow students to apply the concepts that they have learned in a more practical and realistic context. As Teacher Gabby have mentions:

"... role-playing activities enable the students to be immersed which helps them acquire an authentic learning experience that calls for better retention of learning among the students."

This learning activity does not only relate students to the real world but also calls for a deeper understanding of what they are learning.

- *Facilitating Group Debates*

Communication skills are strengthened when facilitating group debates inside the classroom. It also pushes students to think critically and decide for the most rational decision as a team to defend their respective stands. Just like what Teacher Christoff has says,

"...I employ group debates for students to build and deepen their rapport with each other."

Thus, group debates hone students' solidarity as a team empowering them to become effective communicators and informed rational thinkers.

Decision-Making Capacity

There were two (2) explicit categories in identifying the teaching strategies and learning activities that informants implement to make sure that students develop their critical thinking and analytical skills which includes (1) research-based activities, and (2) individualized activities.

Research-based Activities

Teaching students to expose themselves in the field of research is a challenging task for a teacher but as soon as students become engrossed in the field of evidence-based learning, they become more adept at the changes of their learning environment. The research-based instructional activities implemented by the informants were classified into one (1) subcategory which is (a) Implementing Inquiry-based Learning.

- *Implementing Inquiry-based Learning*

Informants implement inquiry-based learning to promote student-centered learning and motivate them to explore a diverse set of topics actively. Moreover, students become more inquisitive when they are given the freedom to conduct investigations and seek probable answers to questions raised by the teacher. About inquiry-based learning, Teacher Christoff states:

"I find the Socratic method a good strategy to let them think and analyze situations or phenomena."

Teacher Christoff believes that an inquiry-based approach is helpful for students to capacitate their thinking skills and mentions:

"...I am fond of letting them do research-based activities, and even in their argument, I would tell them that personal belief should be grounded in the theory or reality."

In congruence with the position of Teacher Christoff, Teacher Louise implements another inquiry-based related activity by saying:

"I usually used open-ended questions which most likely to be more of a decision making, imagination, data analysis, and judgment strategy..."

Moreover, Teacher Gabby emphasizes the use of reflection activities since according to him:

"...I often give them reflective essays about a specific social issue. In this manner, their critical thinking skills and creativity will surely be tapped and tested."

It can be noted that inquiry-based learning activities allow teachers to provide content-specific activities and shape learning experiences grounded on evidence-based principles.

Individualized Activities

Teachers should allow students to be capable of working independently and they must be properly guided especially in making sure that they produce optimal and quality outputs. It all stems from consistent teacher facilitation and students' rational and competitive thinking. The individualized activities applied by the informants to train students to think critically were classified into one (1) subcategory which is (a) Devising Performance Tasks.

- *Devising Performance Tasks*

Informants noted that authentic and individualized performance tasks nurture students' ability to make well-informed decisions and be critical in how they deal with the challenges that they encounter every day. Devising performance tasks that involve generating potential solutions to certain issues hones students to analyze the situation and come up with effective interventions that would eventually lead to the resolution of the problem. Teacher Gabby highlights the use of debate and other informal discourses because according to him:

"...these types of performance tasks maximize their skills in dissecting issues and providing alternatives and interventions..."

He further added that:

"Performance tasks based on individualized activities such as Poster Slogan Making cater to their multiple intelligences and maximize students critical, analytical, and creative thinking skills."

Furthermore, performance tasks provide opportunities for students to be critical thinkers especially when they are exposed to activities offering realistic and first-hand experiences on the environment outside the school. Teacher Marlon supplemented this by saying:

"The effective strategy I utilized in class is the usage of real-life and/or experience-based activities in developing learners' critical thinking skills."

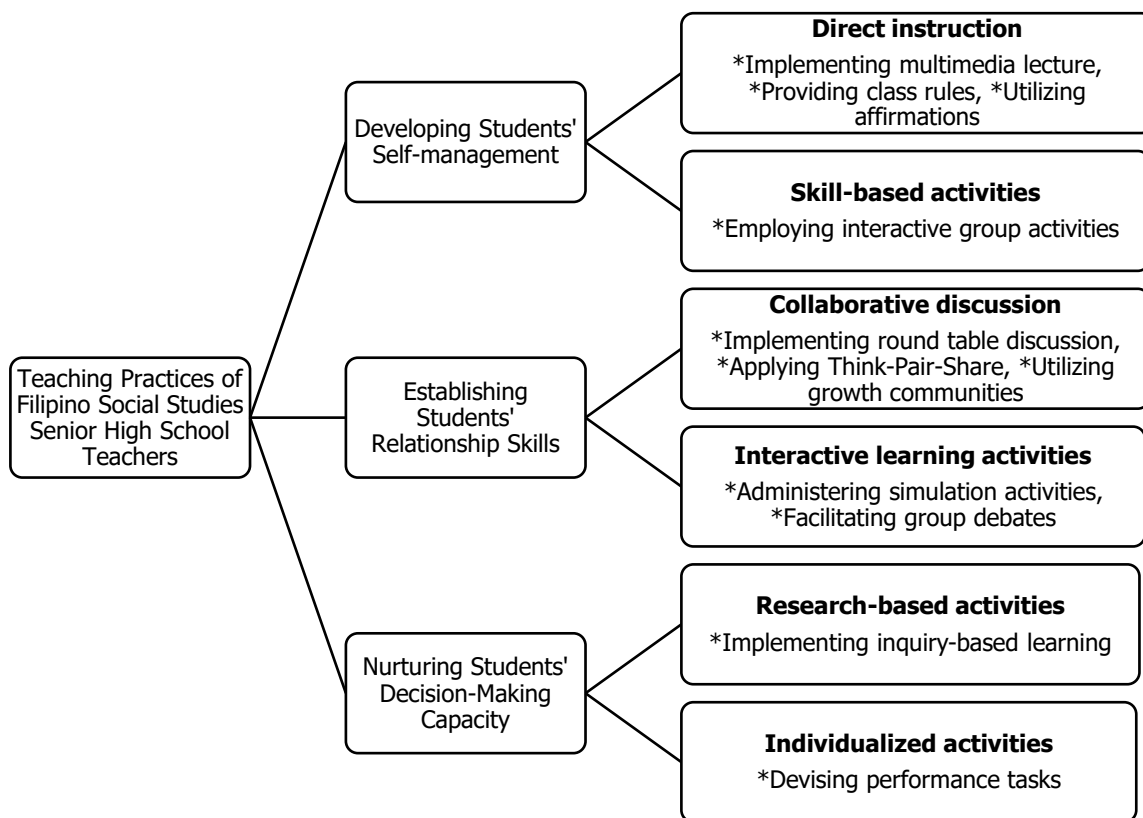In this way, students learn dynamically by situating them in a more realistic context of learning.

Figure 1. Demonstration of meaningful categories

Discussion

This descriptive qualitative research aims to describe the teaching practices of social studies teachers in facilitating self-directed learning of senior high school students in the Philippines.

The accumulated data gained from this study discussed three (3) major themes which include teaching practices that (1) develop students' self-management, (2) establish students' relationship skills, and (3) nurture students' decision-making capacity. The findings also included six (6) significant categories such as (1) direct instruction, (2) skill-based activities, (3) collaborative discussion, (4) interactive learning activities, (5) research-based activities, and (6) individualized activities. The researcher conducted a critical analysis of the information gathered and associated it with relevant literature and research studies that are related to this study.

Teachers implementing lectures with the use of various multimedia tools assist students to be self-directed and responsible for managing their learning (Krautscheid et al., 2022). According to the study of Augustine et al. (2021) in the United States, the use of visual aids, videos, audio recordings, and other interactive elements can sustain the attention of students for a long period. He also noted that students are more likely to take ownership of their

learning since they are engrossed with what is being taught to them. When students are practicing hands-on learning, they can manage their time since their attention toward a discussion infused with multimedia elements is productively utilized (Engelhard et al., 2018). This maximizes the concepts and knowledge that students learn during a learning session (Krautscheid et al., 2022). Furthermore, when students learn efficiently, they can save personal resources (Axon et al., 2022) and allot their remaining time to other activities that could further enhance their ability to study (Schaefer et al., 2018). Multimedia lectures include a variety of presenting techniques, including visual, audio, and interactive aspects (Augustine et al., 2021). This multimodal method accommodates diverse learning styles and improves students' capacity to receive information through numerous sensory channels. However, Engelhard et al. (2018) noted that teachers should not depend on multimedia lectures and must also be proactive in engaging with students for them to gain skills for organizing, integrating, and synthesizing knowledge as they interact with various modalities, strengthening their self-management of learning. Individual learning styles and interests are accommodated not just by adapting multimedia lectures since educational resources are far more available for teachers to use and apply (Hettinger et al., 2021).

Class rules create clear standards for student conduct and behavior (Nasi, 2022). Students can self-regulate their activities when they understand what is expected of them (Marder et al., 2023). Moreover, the study of Tai (2023) in Hong Kong explains that students learn self-discipline and self-control by internalizing and adhering to class norms, which are fundamental parts of self-management. Calcagni et al. (2023) on the other hand, elaborates that class rules are beneficial to student management but it is crucial to encourage students to accept personal responsibility for their actions and conduct. In addition, they learn to make educated decisions and comprehend the repercussions of their actions by following the established norms (Tai, 2023). This encourages self-management by holding students accountable for their actions. Class rules offer a framework for students' self-regulation. When a student's conduct deviates from the set guidelines, they can reflect on their actions (Nasi, 2022), explore other options, and make modifications to bring their behavior back into line with the anticipated standards (Ottenheym-Vliegen et al., 2023). Furthermore, class rules enable the process of self-reflection and self-regulation assisting students in developing self-awareness and self-management abilities (Marder et al., 2023). Teachers can also remember and reinforce class rules regularly, provide positive reinforcement for students who regularly display self-management, and offer help and direction to students who struggle with self-regulation (Nasi, 2022). Teachers may foster students' self-management abilities and promote positive conduct by establishing a supportive and organized learning environment through class rules (Calcagni et al., 2023).

Affirmations from teachers acknowledge students' efforts, skills, and growth (Cook-Sather, 2023). Teachers build students' confidence and self-esteem by recognizing and applauding their hard work and successes (de Mooij et al., 2022). Lalingkar et al. (2022) from India states that feedback and support encourage students to keep working on self-management and reinforce beneficial actions. He continued that teachers' affirmations demonstrate their conviction in their students' potential and ability. Students are also more likely to believe in themselves and their abilities to regulate their learning and behavior when they hear affirmations that highlight their qualities, talents, and progress (Bullard & Bahar, 2023). When students believe in their abilities, they are more likely to take responsibility for their activities and make proactive decisions (de Mooij et al., 2022). In addition, teachers' affirmations can drive students to develop and accomplish personal objectives. They are also more likely to feel encouraged to continue their learning journey when professors give specific affirmations connected to their success, effort, or growth (Cook-Sather, 2023). These affirmations provide students with a feeling of purpose and direction, allowing them to develop and strive toward meaningful goals (Lalingkar et al., 2022). Affirmations can also be used by teachers in their regular encounters with students, such as one-on-one conversations, written feedback, or during class discussions. They can offer precise and sincere affirmations about students' strengths, accomplishments, and spaces for improvement (de Mooij et al., 2022). By continuously offering affirmations, teachers can support students to build confidence, drive, and self-belief (Bullard & Bahar, 2023).

The study of Sukkha et al. (2023) in Thailand posits that interactive group activities require students to collaborate and communicate with one another. Students learn to effectively communicate their ideas, actively listen to others, and work toward common goals through participating in group discussions, problem-solving exercises, or projects (Gellisch et al., 2023). These experiences encourage students to contribute, negotiate, and cooperate with their classmates, which promotes self-management (Gellisch et al., 2023). Students can also take on certain roles and duties within the group through interactive group activities. Students acquire a sense of responsibility when they are held accountable for their assigned responsibilities and contribute to the group's overall performance (Shang & Sivaparthipan, 2022). Meanwhile, according to Boye & Agyei (2023) from Ghana, students are allowed to display leadership qualities and take initiative in interactive group activities. When students take on leadership responsibilities or volunteer to direct the activities of the group, they gain important self-management skills such as decision-making, organization, and motivation. Taking the initiative and demonstrating leadership promote self-management by instilling a sense of ownership and responsibility for the group's outcomes (Tuma, 2021).

Students can engage in polite dialogue through round table discussions. They learn to express themselves productively and respectfully (Colevas et al., 2022). Contrary to the aforementioned statements, the study of Janzen et al. (2023) in the United States explains that round table discussions only teach students to gain good communication skills via active engagement and the exchange of ideas, but the activity is not enough to create and sustain healthy relationships. Meanwhile, Thanheiser & Melhuish (2023) mentioned that students actively listen to their peers' ideas, thoughts, and opinions during round table discussions. They further elaborated that active listening helps students learn to pay attention, comprehend, and respect the perspectives of others. This activity however is conducted in a limited time which makes it difficult to promote empathy and understanding, both of which are necessary components of developing solid connections among peers (Yang et al., 2023). Students must interact and cooperate with their peers during round table discussions because this helps them gain critical skills for effective collaboration and cooperation by working together to expand on ideas, listen to other viewpoints, and establish consensus (Colevas et al., 2022). These abilities are essential for developing strong relationships and attaining common goals (Janzen et al., 2023). Students can use round table discussions to learn active listening, courteous communication, viewpoint-taking, teamwork, conflict resolution, and trust-building (Thanheiser & Melhuish, 2023). These abilities lead to the establishment of a classroom atmosphere in which students feel connected (Homberg et al., 2021).

Think-pair-share gives students a controlled opportunity to develop their communication abilities (Donisi et al., 2022). The study of Kang et al. (2023) from the Republic of Korea emphasizes that students must express their ideas, justify their reasoning, and engage in meaningful discourse with their partners. With this note, students can improve their verbal communication abilities, learn to express themselves effectively and improve their ability to engage in courteous dialogues as a result of this process. Moreover, they carefully listen to their partner's opinions and ideas throughout the pair-share phase of think-pair-share (Akgül-Gündoğdu & Selçuk-Tosun, 2021). However, this activity only maximizes students' ability to collaborate with a partner and is still limited when it comes to enabling students to produce innovative ideas, examine data, and identify solutions (Thijssen et al., 2022). Regardless, students practice attentive listening, empathy, and respect for their partners' contributions during this process. They build and sustain successful relationships which requires effective communication (Kang et al., 2021).

Growth communities encourage student engagement and cooperation for they can collaborate on similar goals, exchange ideas, and encourage one another as they participate in a shared learning experience (Rawas et al., 2020). Furthermore, establishing growth communities at school teaches students to work efficiently as a team, share responsibility, and appreciate varied viewpoints through collaborative activities such as group projects, discussions, and problem-solving assignments (Volet et al., 2019). This cooperation improves interpersonal skills by encouraging teamwork, mutual respect, and the capacity to form positive connections with peers. Peer learning and assistance can be obtained in growth communities (Howe, 2021). It fosters active involvement by having students take turns as both learners and instructors, which nurtures supportive connections. By actively listening to their classmates, asking questions, and providing constructive comments, students improve their communication and interpersonal skills (Rawas et al., 2020).

Simulation activities may call for students to collaborate in teams or groups. They work together to accomplish a common objective, solve difficulties, or imitate real-life circumstances (Rohrig et al., 2022). Students learn to communicate effectively, distribute duties, and utilize everyone's abilities through these exercises (Herlihy, 2022). Remacle et al. (2023) further elaborated that collaboration in simulations promotes relationship skills by helping students to form strong connections, create trust, and recognize the need of working together to achieve common goals. Students can also practice good communication skills through simulation exercises since this type of activity requires students to communicate clearly and simply to clarify their thoughts and actively listen to their peers (Weiss et al., 2021). Furthermore, the study by Casanova et al. (2021) in the United States noted that students improve their verbal and nonverbal communication abilities via simulations which includes the capacity to transmit their views and ideas. Effective communication skills promote comprehension, reduce misunderstandings, and facilitate meaningful conversations, which all contribute to relationship building (McGue et al., 2021).

Students can communicate their thoughts and perspectives in group debates while maintaining respectful contact with their classmates (Chen et al., 2022). Students learn how to articulate their views clearly and concisely while replying to counterarguments objectively and modestly (Cariñanos-Ayala et al., 2021). A study from Ireland conducted by Kearney et al. (2022) states that mindful communication strengthens relationships by encouraging mutual respect, tolerance for opposing viewpoints, and the capacity to engage in productive discourse. This hone students express themselves assertively while remaining courteous, which aids in the formation of good relationships (Cariñanos-Ayala et al., 2021). In addition, students learn to enhance their relationship skills by understanding others' viewpoints, finding common ground, and creating win-win solutions via the process of persuasion and bargaining (Majidi et al., 2021). These abilities aid in efficient communication, cooperation, and the development of strong relationships based on understanding and the use of compromise (Kearney et al., 2022).

Inquiry-based learning begins with students' interest and critical thinking being piqued by offering questions and recognizing challenges (Loyens et al., 2023). Students are encouraged to actively participate in the problem-solving process, which includes identifying gaps in their knowledge or understanding (Lazonder, 2023). Moreover, an Australian study authored by Murphy et al. (2021) mentioned that students begin building their decision-making capacity by deciding what they want to study and learn by identifying challenges or questions to research. As they perform research, gather data, and assess information sources, students develop critical thinking and information literacy abilities, allowing them to make educated and well-informed judgments based on trustworthy and relevant facts (Song et al., 2022). They also learn to balance opposing viewpoints, analyze numerous sources of information, and make judgments based on a thorough grasp of the topic they are analyzing (Nzomo et al., 2023). In addition, students are encouraged to reflect on their decision-making processes and consequences through inquiry-based learning (Loyens et al., 2023). They may assess the success of their decisions, reflect on their thinking, and examine possible alternatives (Murphy et al., 2021). With this, students build metacognitive abilities through reflection and self-assessment, allowing them to better understand their decision-making processes, learn from their experiences, and constantly enhance their decision-making ability (Fried, 2022).

Complicated tasks or challenging situations that require students to analyze information, consider several factors, and weigh alternative possibilities are typical of performance tasks (Nguyen et al., 2023). This sophisticated problem-solving method fosters students' decision-making abilities by assisting them in developing critical thinking skills, evaluating options, and making well-informed decisions (Edwards & Taasoobshirazi, 2022). Students are frequently required to assess the potential repercussions of their actions when completing performance assignments (Zhang & Zhang, 2022). Gorozidis et al. (2021) from Greece also explained that students learn to plan and predict the short and long-term consequences of various decisions when doing performance-related activities. In addition, students become more deliberate decision-makers by contemplating consequences, taking into consideration the quality of the output that they are about to execute (Nguyen et al., 2023). Radkowitsch et al. (2023) also mentioned that students can reflect on their decision-making processes and receive feedback through performance challenges. They can assess the success of their choices, investigate other techniques, and reflect on their rationale (Nguyen et al., 2023). Moreover, reflection and feedback from the outcomes of students' performance tasks encourage continual progress, assisting them in honing their decision-making abilities over time (Radkowitsch et al., 2023).

The significant findings of this study show that it supports the researcher's generated presumptions. One of the researcher's presumptions is that Filipino senior high school social studies teachers use peer discussion as a self-directed learning strategy to develop students' relationship skills which are in

congruence with the results. The accumulated data stipulates that teaching practices Filipino senior high school social studies teachers apply to establish students' relationship skills include the implementation of round table discussion, application of think-pair-share, and utilization of growth communities. The researcher also presumed that senior high school social studies teachers utilize research-related activities in strengthening students' decision-making capacity which matches the outcomes of this study. The information acquired posits that Filipino senior high school social studies teachers nurture students' decision-making capacity by implementing inquiry-based learning during the teaching and learning process.

Along with the majority of research, the current study's design has its limitations that should be considered and may be addressed in future investigations. To begin with, the qualitative findings of this study might be reinforced by quantitative research to offer a better knowledge of the teaching practices applied by Filipino senior high school social studies teachers in a face-to-face post-pandemic learning set-up. Moreover, the study's informants were only limited to Filipino senior high school social studies teachers so a thorough application of the study's results and implications to other fields of teaching specialization may be identified. Furthermore, the findings of this study were gathered during the academic year 2022-2023 only. Ultimately, because the study used written interview questions, the results might be affected by self-report bias. Despite the aforementioned limitations, this study offered viable information on the teaching practices applied by Filipino senior high school social studies teachers in a face-to-face post-pandemic learning set-up which may be utilized to provide credible insights into future research on this field of study.

Similar research about the topic, or further studies that can build and improve on the information provided, are highly encouraged. The findings of this research give out crucial information about the teaching practices applied by Filipino senior high school social studies teachers in a face-to-face post-pandemic learning set-up that is by far less attended by previous researchers which makes it a critical contribution to social studies-related research. Further on, this study could also urge researchers in the academe to become more interested in the pedagogical strategies of social studies educators during the post-pandemic period and trigger the strong intention to delve into this matter to a greater extent. Moreover, the outcomes of this study could be promulgated to all teachers, not just those who are specializing in social studies subjects but to the entire community of educators, for this will help them better understand the most relevant teaching strategies that are to be applied during the post-pandemic era. This study also offers critical insights from their educators and improves their teaching strategies, especially in managing teaching and learning activities daily. Lastly, findings from future research may be used to develop more inclusive teaching policies and instructional practices, as well as provide more opportunities to enhance education and the experience of learners.

Conclusion

Teaching practices of social studies teachers in facilitating self-directed learning of senior high school students play a crucial role in ensuring effective and meaningful learning experiences. They are provided with opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in practical contexts, solve problems, make rational decisions, and engage in tasks that mirror authentic situations. This authenticity enhances students' understanding, critical thinking abilities, and ability to transfer learning to real-world scenarios. Moreover, these teaching practices recognize the diverse needs, backgrounds, and interests of students and provide opportunities for personalized learning experiences that cater to individual student's strengths, interests, and learning styles. By incorporating self-directed learning strategies, students can embrace their unique ways of learning and promote their autonomy in discovering and learning things. Furthermore, relevant teaching practices encourage students to ask questions, investigate, analyze information, and generate solutions. By engaging in hands-on and mind-on activities, students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and inquiry skills, becoming active participants in their learning. In a post-pandemic face-to-face learning environment, relevant teaching practices are vital for creating engaging, meaningful, and inclusive learning experiences. They ensure that students are actively involved, motivated, and prepared for the challenges of the future. By connecting learning to students' lives, interests, and the real world, relevant teaching practices foster deep understanding, critical thinking, and a lifelong love for learning.

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