PROJECT-BASED LEARNING AND STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN HISTORY AND POLITICAL EDUCATION IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN GOMA DIVISION, MUKONO DISTRICT

BY

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2023/HD04/1690U

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE TRAINING IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN CURRICULUM STUDIES OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

DECEMBER, 2025

DECLARATION

I, **AKAREUT ESTHER RACHAEL,** do declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this research dissertation titled; ***"Project-based learning and students' critical thinking skills in history and political education in selected secondary schools in Goma division, Mukono district"*** has been submitted here or elsewhere for any award.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how project-based learning (PBL) fosters students' critical thinking skills in History and Political Education in selected secondary schools in Goma Division, Mukono District. It was guided by three objectives: to establish how collaborative PBL activities enhance critical thinking; to assess how student autonomy in PBL fosters critical thinking; and to examine how real-world connections within PBL activities enhance critical thinking. A quantitative approach within the positivist paradigm was adopted, using a correlational research design. The target population comprised 10 secondary schools in Goma Division, from which four participated in the study. An accessible population of 440 Senior Three and Senior Four students was obtained, and a sample of 205 students was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Stratified and simple random sampling ensured fair representation. Data was collected using a self-administered Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed in IBM SPSS using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. Findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between collaborative PBL activities and students' critical thinking skills ($r = 0.323$, $p < 0.001$); student autonomy and critical thinking ($r = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$); and real-world connections and critical thinking ($r = 0.609$, $p < 0.001$). Overall, PBL practices were significantly related to students' critical thinking skills ($r = 0.540$, $p < 0.001$), leading to rejection of all null hypotheses. The study concludes that PBL is an effective pedagogical approach for nurturing critical thinking in History and Political Education. It recommends integrating collaborative and autonomy-driven projects, strengthening real-world learning experiences, and enhancing competence-based, inquiry-oriented History instruction.

Key words: Project-based learning, collaborative activities, student autonomy, real-world connections, critical thinking skills, History and Political Education, Mukono District.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBC	Competence Based Curriculum.
O ‘Level	Ordinary Level
PBL	Project-Based Learning.
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and mathematics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Center.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Critical thinking is one of the essential skills for learning in the 21st century. One strategy to encourage critical thinking skills in learning is the use of a learning model that can educate these abilities. (Angraeni et al, 2023). Critical thinking encompasses knowledge and capability for achieving understanding, making appropriate judgement and taking meaningful action as well as pedagogical approach to activating learning (Chen & Dai-ling, 2015). This chapter details the background of the study, problem statement, purpose, objectives, research hypotheses, significance, scope and justification of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Historical Perspective

Project based learning (PBL) dates 1960 as a formal teaching strategy in McMaster University in Canada (Dewey,1897; Gorghiu, 2021). In 1980, kindergarten, primary and secondary schools in United states and Canada adopted project-based learning practices to activate students' critical thinking (Lim et al., 2023). The origin of PBL is traced to the American philosopher and educator John Dewey. Dewey stated that, "The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and assist him in properly responding to these influences." (Dewey, 1897, p.9).

Project-based learning equips learners with critical thinking and problem-solving skills suitable for this fifth generation to match with the market needs in the real-world. PBL enhances development of 21st century skills, these necessary skills are needed for successful implementation of project-based learning curriculum in the classroom. Students are provided opportunity after opportunity to build upon their problem solving, collaboration and higher order

thinking skills (Efstratia, 2014: pg. 1258). Problem solving is the outcome of PBL aligned to group-work approach which foster economic development (Lim et al., 2023). Chiu (2020), notes that project-based learning (PBL) is a group-work approach in teaching and learning, through which students are exposed to situations regarding real-life issues and practices. In other words, open-ended, problem solving, decision-making, or investigative activities, are used to achieve desired goals and evaluate their performance and progress. Projects are designed based on issues and needs that students define.

Project based learning refers to problem oriented and student-centered learning that is organized around projects (Thomas, 2000). Student centered learning connects theory with practice and brings versatility to teachers' instruction (Viro et 'al, 2020). During PBL, students carry out research in collaboration with each other (Krajcik & Shin, 2014; Tal et al., 2006**).** Project-based learning is characterized by student centered learning (Mustamin et al., 2024). This is referred to as learning by doing and a teacher plays a pivotal role of facilitating learning. John Dewey (1859 - 1952) is widely credited for coining the phrase "*learning by doing*." In describing the importance of experiential learning, he argues that learning should be rooted in real-life experiences and learning occurs best by doing. Furthermore, learning by doing allows students to do something on their own which support co-creation of knowledge. Key points in Dewey's creed center on the total development of the child. Dewey argues that, for a child to become successful and a functioning member of society, they need to be well rounded and have experiences that allow for the full development of skills needed in the world after the completion of their education. PBL has been embraced by educator's worldwide as a means of promoting the higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving abilities among students, collaboration is fostered for holistic student development and lifelong learning.

Considering the African perspectives on PBL (Twahirwa &Twizeyimana (2021), in Rwanda noticed that project-based learning has been undermined by teachers to a greater extent

due to several constraints such as insufficient time allocated to science subjects, dominance of teacher-centered teaching, inadequate teacher training and workshops, scarcity of experimental tasks, the lack of creativity and innovation in some schools to improvise materials, which constitute a big challenge towards the implementation of PBL approaches.

Nxasana et al (2023) observed that implementing PBL at an institutional level in South Africa requires a significant restructuring of classroom practices. This shift challenges the traditional roles of teachers and necessitates the adoption of a constructivist approach. Nxasana et al, further notes that changing teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, particularly when transitioning from traditional to constructivist methods is not easy. Additionally, there is limited research on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices. Never the less, pedagogical training activities are essential in helping teachers develop the professional and pedagogical competencies needed to implement PBL effectively.

Uganda's O' level history education has undergone various reforms over the years. Before 1980, Uganda's education system followed a British model, with O' level examinations taken after four years of secondary education. The curriculum was content-focused, with history taught as a chronological sequence of events. However, the Ugandan government introduced a new education system in 1987, which emphasized skills and competencies, with history taught thematically rather than chronologically (Nakabugo & Kasule, 2016). The teaching of history under the new system has been hampered by a lack of teaching resources, poor teacher training, and limited support from parents and the community (Akankwasa and Kibedi, 2018). The traditional curriculum was teacher-centered and focused on content delivery through lectures and note-taking. The assessment methods were mainly based on end-of-term exams and final national examinations (Kavuma & Kiggundu, 2019). Furthermore, the curriculum was characterized by a lack of practical skills and real-life applications, which led to poor student performance and a lack of interest in history (Kasozi, 2013). The traditional curriculum did not cater for the diverse

learning needs of students, and there was no emphasis on the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills (Nakkazi & Nampijja, 2020). The current implementation of competency-based curriculum (CBC) in Uganda seeks to address some of these challenges and improve the quality of history education (Kasozi, 2018). Project-based learning is one of the methodologies employed in the teaching-learning process of history in the Ugandan competence-based curriculum to develop competencies among learners such as the problem-solving skill, critical thinking, innovation and creativity among others.

Critical thinking on the other hand as defined by Scriven and Paul (1987) is stated as the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. The critical thinking was adopted in secondary schools to allow students discover ways of performing tasks to foster human capital development (Gorghiu, 2021). However, Richard Paul (1987), a widely recognized contemporary authority on critical thinking, defined critical thinking as the following: (1) Disciplined, self-directed thinking, which exemplifies the perfections of thinking appropriate to a particular mode or domain of thinking. (2) Thinking that displays mastery of intellectual skills and abilities. (3) The art of thinking about your thinking while you are thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, or more defensible. Therefore, teaching critical thinking skills is often endorsed as a means of helping students develop their abilities to navigate the complex world in which we live and as a way to help students succeed (Jonassen, 2000).

Critical thinking is traced by James Streib (1992) to date back to the early Greek philosophers in the more recent past and he identified 4 distinct phases in the ideas that constitute critical thinking.

The first phase lasted from 1910-1939 and emanated from John Dewey's writings on reflective thinking and the scientific method as the basis for thinking and inquiry. His emphasis on reflective thinking and inquiry-based approaches laid a foundation for approaches central to history and political education, particularly in interpretation of past events in connection to contemporary historical issues. The second phase (1940-1961), includes Edward Glaser (1941), David Russell (1941) and B. Othanel Smith (1953), whose work builds on the work of John Dewey, during this phase, critical thinking was used in relation to judging the accuracy of statements, it is in this phase that the phrase critical thinking originated from. This perspective aligns with historical source citation where learners assess the credibility and bias of historical documents, question and critique historical narratives. The third phase (1962-1979), involved narrowing the definition of critical thinking to focus on evaluating statements as correct or incorrect and teaching students to come to correct conclusions based upon given information. It is in this phase that the role of creative thinking entered the discussion on critical thinking. In the context of history teaching, this phase resonates with historical interpretation, where students make informed judgements about multiple historical information presented to by synthesizing evidence. The fourth phase identified by Streib (1980-1992), broadened the previous definitions and encompassed problem-solving. This phase addressed other related theories of cognition including higher order thinking, problem-solving and metacognition. These ideas strengthened learner-centered pedagogies in history education, encouraging students to reflect on how they reason about historical problems, make evidence-based arguments and draw connections between past and contemporary issues. However, since Streib's study, new ideas about critical thinking have emerged and have been reviewed.

1.1.2 Theoretical Perspective

Constructivism Learning theory; - The theory that informs the study is constructivism learning theory. Constructivism, is a learning theory that is widely known by the work of Jean Piaget

(1953) and Lev Vygotsky (1962). Constructivism, in both individual and social contexts, supports the scientific and philosophical underpinnings of the project-based approach. A related theory is constructionism, which is distinct in its definition by the manipulation of objects. Constructivism, proposed by Jean Piaget, proposes that knowledge is not transmitted from teachers to students, but constructed by students themselves when interacting with the environment. In the context of history and political education, students construct knowledge through inquiry, interpretation of historical evidence, reflection and dialogue rather than memorization of names, dates and events. Piaget's constructivism theory emphasizes learners making meaning of learning, building new ideas based on prior knowledge, this is reflected in historical investigations, document analysis and independent project tasks through which learners interpret historical events, evaluate causes and consequences and synthesize information from multiple sources.

Vygotsky's social constructivism highlights the role of social interaction, collaboration and language in learning. In History and Political Education, students co-construct historical meaning through debates, group projects, peer discussions and collaborative interpretation of historical texts and artifacts. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding are particularly relevant in PBL settings, where teachers guide learners in interpreting complex historical documents, analyzing political narratives, or evaluating contrasting viewpoints before gradually withdrawing support as learners gain independence and confidence in reasoning.

Scaffolding a unique concept in constructivism occurs when children are asked to perform a task that has some meaning but goes beyond their effort and are granted assistance by the more knowledgeable other. This idea is called the zone of proximal development, proposed by Vygotsky (1962, p. 244). Learners are supported to help them be successful, Vygotsky argued that children learn best when they are working with someone who is more knowledgeable than they are. The learner is scaffolded from what they know individually, to mastery of new skills

and knowledge. Scaffolding in history classrooms may, for example, occur when a teacher supports learners to interpret primary sources, analyze political speeches, or reconstruct historical narratives using evidence, after which learners independently critique sources, identify bias, and justify their conclusions. This process nurtures autonomy, reflective inquiry and higher-order thinking — core attributes of critical thinking in historical learning contexts. The two primary types of constructivism - cognitive or individual (Piaget, 1953) and social (Vygotsky, 1962) - are both inherent in project-based learning as defined by Thomas (2000). Similarities between individual and social include inquiry teaching methods and students creating concepts built on existing knowledge (Powell et al, 2009).

According to the social constructivist approach, instructors have to adapt to the role of facilitators and not teachers (Bauersfeld, 1995). A facilitator helps the learner to get to his or her own understanding of the content instead of simply explaining a principle. The learners are actively engaged in constructing their own knowledge rather than passively receiving information from others. Learning is associated with hands on or experiential learning, this is in line with Vygotsky's belief that learners learn best by doing and experiencing things for themselves. The theory facilitates construction of knowledge where leaners connect with real world, student autonomy and collaborative activities through experiences and reflection on tasks assigned on the project. The learner centered mode advocated in constructivism theory supports the project-based learning which fosters critical thinking of students in schools.

1.1.3 Conceptual Perspective

This study is grounded in the key concepts of project based learning and critical thinking. The mentioned concepts will be illuminated subsequently. Project-based learning as defined by Thomas (2000), refers to problem-oriented and student-centered learning that is organized around projects. Chiu (2020) adds that project-based learning (PBL) emphasizes group-work in teaching and learning, through which students are exposed to real-life issues and practices.

However, this study conceptualizes Project-based learning as an instructional strategy that actively engages learners in exploring historical issues through; collaborative learning activities broken down into; peer to peer learning, group presentations and written group reports, these foster team work and a shared responsibility of learning that evokes critical thinking. student autonomy, where learners are encouraged to take charge of their learning through self-directed learning, decision making and reflective learning, there by fostering independence and self-drive. Real-world connections with in PBL, where learning tasks are connected to real-life contexts such as historical simulations like museum visits, debates and relevant scenarios. These help learners relate historical contents with contemporary experiences

Critical thinking is described by Scriven and Paul (1987) as the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action**.** In this study, critical thinking is conceptualized as learners' ability to deeply engage with historical content through; Analysis, where learners examine historical sources, identify causes, effects, detect biases and break down complex historical events. Application, where students apply historical knowledge to understand and interpret historical narratives, drawing lessons from the past to inform the present. Evaluation, where learners critically assess historical arguments and make informed judgements about past events and their implications.

History is a continuing and unending dialogue between the present and the past with the historian serving as a guide and interpreter. (E. H. Carr, 1961), In the context of this study, history entails the political, social, economic, cultural intellectual and technological developments in the past that inform the future. It involves constructing narratives, analyzing diverse perspectives, interpreting historical artefacts and sources, and understanding the ethical dimensions of historical interpretation.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework demonstrates how the independent variable relates with the dependent variable in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The independent variable is Project-based learning which is conceptualized in terms of; collaborative learning (peer-to peer learning, group presentation and written group reports), Student autonomy (self-directed learning, decision making and reflection), real world connection (relevant and authentic activities). The dependent variable is critical thinking which is measured in terms of; analysis, application and evaluation. The students' engagement in project based learning activate their critical thinking at school (Chu et al., 2018). The framework demonstrates the way project-based learning relates to the students critical thinking at school. The demonstrated flow diagram is set out in the Figure 1.1.

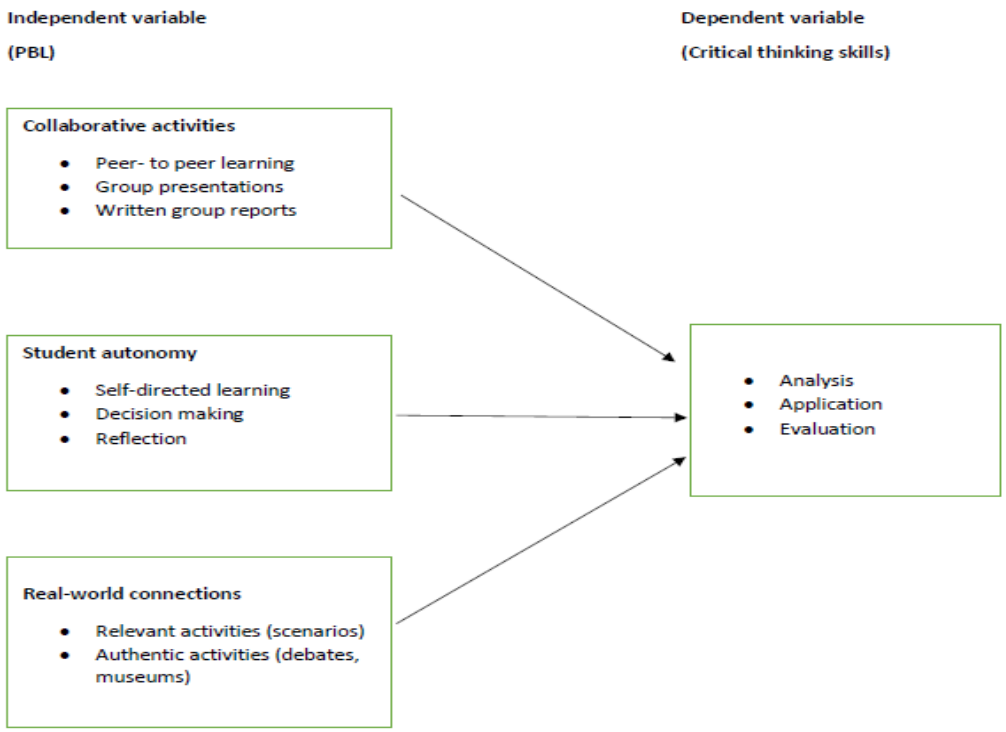

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

1.1.4 Contextual Perspective

The Government of Uganda through the ministry of Education and sports, rolled out the lower secondary competence-based curriculum (CBC) in 2020, which was aimed at addressing the limitations of the traditional curriculum and assessment methods by emphasizing skills and competences (Eriya et al, 2023). The CBC was designed to enhance critical thinking, creativity and innovation among learners (Mulindwa et al, 2020). The learners' competencies are enriched with CBC at secondary level which activate their critical thinking to relate what they know and learnt with real world (L. Zhang, 2023). The transition from teacher centered mode curriculum to the CBC which is learner centered is expected to unlock the human capital development for economic transformation in the country.

The History curriculum was more of content focused and taught as a chronological sequence of events before the new system introduced it to be taught thematically than chronologically (Nakabugo& Kasule,2016). The Uganda's secondary curriculum reformed through NCDC, combines History and Political Education into a single subject to foster understanding of past events, governance structures and civic responsibilities. The syllabus for senior one and two emphasizes learner centered approaches, advocating for and dedicating time for research, assignments and projects to develop competencies such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes (KUSVA). Critical thinking explicitly is positioned as a generic skill, progressing from basic analysis for example, categorizing historical sources, to advanced evaluation such as assessing neo-colonialism impacts and proposing solutions. Project-based learning is woven in through hands on activities that encourage inquiry and real-world application. For example, in a topic like "Migrations and settlements into East Africa", students conduct field work interviews on local origins and migrations, draw maps and write reports, promoting analysis of causes and effects, while linking historical patterns to contemporary issues like refugee rights. Teaching strategies include group discussions, debates, role plays and ICT/ Library research, with teachers

acting as facilitators. Assessments use triangulation, conversations, observations and products such as posters on peaceful co-existence, essays on human rights, to evaluate critical thinking in context. The thematic learning and teaching prioritize use of project-based learning to perform activities in secondary school. In addition, CBC allows a variety of teaching and learning approaches that encourage learners to be more active and engaged in the learning process, it allows learners progress at their own pace (Mutisya, 2019). However, projects demonstrated in history as aligned to CBC indicate low applicability of critical thinking in the activities (Akankwasa & Kibedi, 2018). For instance, in project activities that require students to investigate the causes and consequences of political conflicts in Uganda, analyze the impact of colonial policies on local communities, or interpret primary sources such as speeches, photographs and archival records, many learners tend to reproduce descriptive narratives or copied information rather than evaluating evidence, drawing comparisons, or providing reasoned historical interpretations. The contribution of parents in implementation of CBC is contestable although the government is exhausting all options to effectively support the PBL.

The critical thinking activities vary among learners which indicates how they relate with challenges and demands on real world (Alt et al., 2023). Regardless, CBC has the potential to enhance students' critical thinking, it is designed to shift focus from content-centered approach to a skill-centered approach (Mugisa & Kigongo-Bukenya, 2021). The students critical thinking is desired to support economic development although it's very poor as indicated in project work paper on the recently released 'O' level UNEB examination (UNEB Report, 2025). The project work was not well performed as majority of students missed A's and B's which indicates underutilization of critical thinking skills in the activities. While students complete project activities, many demonstrate basic factual understanding with limited analytical engagement and weak justification of historical arguments, particularly in tasks that demand interpretation, synthesis or evaluation of sources (UNEB Transitional Commentary, 2024; UNEB Project Work

Remarks, 2025). The results under lower secondary CBC indicated student achievements with grades ranging from A to E. The grades are computed on 20% school-based continuous assessment and 80% final examination performance which facilitated the award. The candidates who met the requirements for the UCE certificate had result 1 on their transcripts and certificates.

In Mukono District, especially schools in Goma division, these challenges are evident as educators' grapple with the new CBC. The low grades (D and E) reflected among students on project work, is largely attributed to low implementation of critical thinking on tasks undertaken during the learning and teaching proccess, minimal guidance during project work and limited access to project materials and resources. The passing of exams in the new lower secondary curriculum (CBC) resides on how students critically think about the tasks or questions administered in the examination to ably provide correct desired responses (UNEB Candidature, 2025). In Mukono district for the 2024 Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) results, 350,146 candidates (98.05%) qualified for the UCE certificate, with 359,417 candidates sitting the exams (UNEB Transitional statement Mukono, 2024). Much as students had result 1 at 98.05%, project work was poorly performed with D and E grades indicating a basic understanding, with limited critical thinking. The unknown hindrances to poor performance of students in papers especially those with E leaves a gap to investigate on how project-based learning relates to students critical thinking on tasks in secondary schools.

1.2 Problem Statement

Critical thinking skill must be engrained in every student to adopt to the increasing complex challenges as well as growth of science and technology, which are restructuring the current society. Critical thinking abilities are inevitable to make better decisions during the learning process. Students who think critically can construe, apply, analyze, evaluate, infer and self-regulate their thoughts on tasks (Shaw et al, 2020). Students can use critical thinking to think creatively by analyzing and evaluating the situation, work on a problem with others and

communicate successfully (Ma Zhang & Luo, 2021). PBL allows students to make connections between school and life, improves team work by allowing students to learn from each other as well as themselves (Cortazar et al, 2021) and enhances students critical thinking abilities (Heba & Khataibeh, 2021; Astra, Rosita & Raihanati, 2019).

Ineffective critical thinking in History and Political Education has been associated with learners' limited ability to analyze, apply, evaluate the tasks. Assessments at UCE level still largely tests recall and memorization rather than promoting higher order thinking skills (Mitana, Giacomazzi and Abad, 2021). Consistent with this view, D'Agostino (2023) observes that many Ugandan classrooms remain predominantly rote-oriented, prioritizing recall over interpretation and application which limits opportunities for learners to develop critical thinking skills. In contrast, effective critical thinking in the contexts of history and political education refers to learners' ability to analyze, evaluate, conceptualize and synthesize historical information, rather than merely recalling facts. This involves engaging with inquiry-oriented strategies such as role plays, simulations, examination of multiple texts, analysis of primary sources and historical documents, and interpretation of different viewpoints and perspectives (Savich,2008). However, in some learning contexts, students perceive history as less engaging or disconnected from real-life application particularly when learning is dominated by memorization and factual recall of names, dates and events (Lim, 2021). Although CBC was designed to enhance practical skills and critical thinking, many teachers are still cocooned in traditional teaching methods as most of their questions emphasize memorization which is against the tenets of the new CBC and deter students critical thinking (Muzaale, 2023). In most schools in Mukono District, students solely rely in group discussions to connect their thoughts with real world and collaborative learning as a way of generating and sharing knowledge but critical thinking as an approach to tasks has remained a challenge (UCE-UNEB Transition Results, 2024). In addition, the assessment of

history under the new curriculum has been criticized for not adequately measuring students' knowledge and understanding of historical events (Kizito & Byaruhanga, 2020).

In Mukono District secondary schools, these challenges reflect a broader national trend where learners continue to demonstrate challenges in analyzing, applying and evaluating historical tasks despite exposure to collaborative learning approaches such as group discussions. This suggests a need to examine pedagogical approaches that can more effectively cultivate students' critical thinking skills. This study therefore seeks to explore PBL potentials in cultivating students critical thinking skills in History and Political Education in selected secondary schools in Goma division, Mukono District.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine how project-based learning fosters development of students' critical thinking skills in history and political education in selected secondary schools in Goma division, Mukono district.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To establish how collaborative PBL activities enhance students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.
2. To assess how student autonomy in PBL fosters students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.
3. To establish how real-world connections with in PBL activities enhance students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between collaborative PBL activities and the levels of students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.

2. There is no significant relationship between student autonomy in PBL and students critical thinking skills in history and political education.
3. There is no significant relationship between real-world connections with in PBL activities and the levels of students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This project aims to create more pathways and opportunities for student engagement in the history classroom as they engage in real world historical inquiries which foster deeper understanding and appreciation of historical events among learners. While there are many PBL resources for the STEM fields, there are not as many for the humanities, this resource will therefore support teachers in engaging their students with active, critical thinking strategies for problem solving.

The study is aimed at teacher empowerment and professional development as the findings of the study will inform teachers on effective instructional strategies and approaches to use in their history classrooms to foster critical thinking among learners. Educators can be able to design interesting instructional materials and use better teaching methods tailored towards learner centeredness to prepare learners for real world challenges by examining past events and their consequences to find solutions through development of the critical thinking skills.

The study will add to the existing body of knowledge in the field of research in similar studies that would later be used as reference for future researchers.

Findings and recommendations from the study will inform decision making and help policy makers implement effective strategies to improve project-based learning in the history classroom, this could be through curriculum reviews and improvements to suit learners needs.

The study will help foster inclusivity in the education system given the fact that learners have different learning styles and paces of learning, project-based learning would help cater for

the learning interests of all learners as learners progressively learn at their own paces. This would help educators to also adjust their teaching styles to accommodate for the differences in learning among learners.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is divided into Geographical scope, Content scope, educational context and Time scope as explained below.

1.7.1 Geographical Scope

The study will be conducted in Goma division in Mukono district. Goma division is bordered by Ntenjeru sub county in the south, Nogojje sub county in the East, Kira town and Wakiso district in the west and Nama sub county in the North.

The study will cover; Namilyango college school, Bukerere college school, Seeta high school- main campus and Paul Mukasa secondary school. The study undertakes 2 governments and 2 private secondary schools respectively in Goma division, this will help gain insights and perspectives of students from different school settings and environments for generalizability of findings. The mentioned secondary schools in Goma division have facilities and largely integrate project-based learning but the low performance of students as indicated in the academic achievements justifies ineffective critical thinking on tasks (Mukono District Education Records, 2025).

1.7.2 Content Scope

The study investigates the contributions of project-based learning on critical thinking skills in history and political education. The study explores on how collaborative PBL activities enhance students critical thinking skills in history and political education, how student autonomy enhances students critical thinking skills in history and political education and how real-world

connections with in PBL enhance students critical thinking skills in history and political education.

1.7.3 Educational Context

The study will concentrate in history and political education as a subject in secondary schools in Goma division, Mukono district. The study considers the lower secondary classes taking on the competence-based curriculum, specifically S3 and S4 classes.

1.7.4 Time Scope

The study will focus on a time period of 4 years, between 2021-2024 to enable the researcher gather deeper insights into the study, this period is selected since it can bring real impact to the study

1.8 Justification of the Study

This study seeks to explore the effectiveness of project-based learning models in history and political education in fostering critical thinking skills among secondary school students. it seeks to examine how collaborative PBL activities, student autonomy in selecting project topics and decision making, and real-world connections with in PBL activities enhance development of critical thinking skills in history and political education. According to Sierra (2018), creating an authentic PBL experience for students is a far greater one for history than it is for science. As a middle school history teacher, she emphasizes a great need to model easily accessible PBL units that teachers can use to create their own. PBL offers a hands-on, student-centered approach that deepens learners understanding of historical events and text and enhance their ability to critically analyze and solve problems. However, in practice, the way project tasks are administered in many history lessons may not effectively promote critical thinking of students, thus raise concerns on how PBL is being implemented.

PBL beyond the history classroom supports holistic development of students by fostering development of essential 21st century skills such as problem-solving, collaboration, communication and critical thinking. While PBL has been widely adopted in STEM disciplines due to its natural alignment with inquiry-based learning, its application in the humanities presents unique challenges that must be addressed (Sierra, 2018). Therefore, to maximize PBL potentials in history education, project tasks must be tailored to encourage analytical thinking, creativity and learner autonomy.

Despite the emphasis on learner-centered approaches, students critical thinking remains under developed in many schools, even where PBL is in place (Zhang,2023). This indicates a gap between the theoretical implementation of PBL and its outcomes. The fifth generational learning, requires students to ably apply critical thinking in real-world situations and tasks (Lim et al,2023). Yet many learners struggle to do so, particularly in interpreting historical content to relate the past to the present and the future. History education is vital in shaping citizen ability to draw lessons from the past to address contemporary challenges and contribute to national development. poor critical thinking in history deters students' ability to make informed decisions and valuable judgements in real-life situations and in academic tasks. if this study is not carried out, a continuous gap shall persist in teaching strategies, assessment and curriculum delivery, limiting the impact of PBL. Therefore, this study seeks to close the gaps as it seeks to gain insights into how PBL relates to critical thinking skills development in history and political education among secondary school students.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review and critical analysis of existing literature on the role of project-based learning in fostering students' critical thinking skills in history lessons, specific to three key objectives: how making real-world connections within PBL activities enhance students' critical thinking skills in history lessons; how student autonomy in PBL enhances students' critical thinking skills in history lessons and how collaborative PBL activities enhance students' critical thinking skills in history lessons. This is aimed at identifying the existing gaps in the literature and fill the gaps by focusing on Ugandan context.

2.1 Foundation of Project Based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) is premised on an idea that students learn best by actively engaging in real-world problems and projects, fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and the application of knowledge in meaningful contexts (Zhang, 2023). The PBL allows students to examine the environment to provide action that connects with real world through individual or collaborative learning for sharing of knowledge on the tasks at school. The PBL aligns with constructivist learning, where students actively build their knowledge and understanding through experience and reflection, rather than passively receiving information (Olkinuora, 2013). The student-centered model support how critical thinking is involved in tasks execution to unlock their cognitive development.

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

According to Trilling & Fadel, (2009), critical thinking skills are essential in today's world of work and everyone should strive to master the skills. However, embracing these skills is still lacking in most classrooms. Saputra et'al (2018), revealed that Indonesian accounting students

were not directed to develop critical thinking due to teacher-centered approaches. This highlights a broader concern that goes beyond accounting or Indonesia but rather covers many disciplines that still struggle to prioritize students' autonomy and active engagement. To foster critical thinking, collaborative learning structures, particularly models have been shown, such as the jigsaw cooperative model, which encourages peer to peer learning. (Pozzi,2010: Dodymus,2008). Schoenberger-Orgad & Spiller (2014), further emphasize that active group discussions and team work during the learning process create an environment where critical thinking thrives. Although this model has demonstrated great success in nurturing critical thinking, its focus on accounting puts a limitation to its applicability in humanity disciplines such as history and political education particularly in the Ugandan secondary school's context. This gap provides a strong rationale for the current study.

Schechter, (2011) and Eggen & Kauchak (2012) put a distinction between problem-based learning and project-based learning, arguing that problem-based learning presents problems during learning and students are presented with predefined problems to solve through active discussions and research while project-based learning gives learners freedom to choose problems based on their experiences, fostering great autonomy and critical engagement of the learners (Bell,2010). (Prince & Felder, 2007), argue that, this autonomy is not only very essential in developing critical thinking skills, but also fosters collaboration and communication, which are key 21st century skills.

Several studies illuminate on the collaborative nature of PBL in supporting meaningful student engagement. For example, Jang et'al. (2016) and skinner et'al. (2008) point out that students are more engaged when given complex relevant tasks with the teacher's guidance. classrooms offering challenging, meaningful assignments with teacher support see higher student engagement. In addition, Blumenfeld et'al (1992) also found that cognitive participation increases when learners are presented with challenging tasks, this directly supports the

development of critical thinking. However, the link between engagement and critical thinking needs further exploration in the context of history and political education.

According to Torrijo et'al (2021), motivation and commitment positively affect transversal skills like team work, communication and critical thinking. To harness these benefits, PBL courses must be rigorously designed, featuring challenging tasks, expert guidance and peer cooperation (Barlow & Brown, 2020; Bedard., 2010; Lee et'al., 2016; Morrison et'al., 2020). While existing studies highlight positive impacts of collaborative PBL on critical thinking, further research is needed to explore these dynamics in the context of Uganda in history and political education, the gap the current study aims to fill.

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

Student autonomy is a cornerstone of PBL, and several scholars have explored its potential in enhancing learners' critical engagement. According to Fried Booth (2000), PBL offers learners an opportunity to take ownership of their learning, by setting their own objectives and pursuing their learning interests. This aligns with Nunan's (1997) assertion that learners' autonomy is best fostered in the classroom, through incorporating student focused content, learners driven goals and opportunities for decision making. These approaches position students as active participants rather than passive recipients, a shift that is crucial in cultivating higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking.

A link between autonomy and cognitive development is further supported by Little (1991), who defines autonomy as a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independence. Similarly, Holec (1981) describes autonomy as the ability to take charge of one's own learning. these definitions emphasize the reflective and evaluative dimensions of learning, which skills significantly foster critical thinking. However, most studies do not create a

link between student autonomy and critical thinking in the specific context of history education. A notable study is by J. F Agudelo and A.M Moralo-Vasco (2019) in Columbia, which examined a 10th grade EFL class. The researchers revealed that students initially labelled as disengaged became more responsible and collaborative after engaging in PBL activities. Although the study demonstrated great growth in learner autonomy, it doesn't directly address how this shift impacts students critical thinking abilities. This highlights a research gap that this study seeks to address with in the Ugandan secondary school history and political education context.

Magendoller (2010), in outlining his 7essentials for PBL, encourages students to undertake meaningful projects based on their learning interests and styles. He argues that handing out pre-packaged projects without student involvement demotivates learning and limits cognitive engagement. His case study, inspired by a student led environmental project in sandiego, demonstrates how student autonomy in selecting topics, designing activities and presenting outcomes can build 21st century skills, including critical thinking. However, his study comes from a technologically advanced context, leaving a gap in how similar principles can be adapted to the Ugandan educational environment, particularly in the discipline of history and political education that is largely taught through rigid teacher-centered methods.

A teacher's role is equally vital in developing student autonomy. Tort-Moloney (1997), describes an autonomous teacher as one who is self-aware and adaptable in their pedagogical decisions. Thavenius (in Cotterall & Crabbe, 1999) expands this idea by defining teacher autonomy as the ability and willingness to help learners take responsibility for their learning. This highlights both the importance of teacher and learner autonomy in nurturing a critical thinking environment. Therefore, while existing literature demonstrates how student autonomy is integral to the success of PBL and in developing critical thinking, most existing studies are conducted in foreign countries and non-humanity contexts, a gap this study seeks to fill by

examining the relationship between student autonomy and critical thinking in history and political education in Ugandan secondary school contexts.

2.4 Real-world connections with in PBL activities enhancing students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.

Integrating real-world connections in PBL can play a pivotal role in fostering students critical thinking. B.M Maguth et'al (2019), argues that many young people today feel so alienated from the traditional, social and political institutions and he stresses the importance of empowerment through curriculum. Drawing on Berman's (1990) despair and empowerment curriculum curve in social studies and history curriculum, Maguth emphasizes that merely introducing students to historical content such as the revolutionary wars or genocides without engaging learners meaningfully can lead to despair or disempowerment. However, if students are engaged in real-world problem-solving activities linked to historical content, they develop both social and critical thinking skills. This approach transforms history from a passive collection of events to an active exploration of the enduring human challenges and possible solutions.

Berman's (1990) model, aligns with Vygotsky's (1978/1995). socio-constructivist paradigm, which emphasizes on learners constructing meaning based on their personal experiences and prior knowledge. Within this frame work, real-world connections in PBL serve as a bridge between historical understanding and current societal issues, providing students with opportunities to take informed actions based on analysis of the cause-and-effect relationship, these foster critical thinking. Similarly, the inquiry-based social studies curriculum advocated by Grant, Swan, and Lee (2017) and the National council for social studies (NCSS, 2010), call for history instruction that equips learners for active civic life, advocated for using world questions to guide inquiry, this demands critical evaluation of sources, argumentations and collaborative problem-solving.

Research in the Netherlands by Van Straaten, Wilschut, and Oostdam (2016), identify three pedagogical practices to enhance historical consciousness: Tracing historical developments over time, drawing analogies between the past and the present, and exploring enduring human issues. Historical consciousness as defined by Jeismann (1988), and Rusen (2004,2017), involves recognizing how past events inform current and future decisions, emphasizing that history is characterized by change and continuity. Although these studies appreciate historical relevancy, their focus on historical relevance creates a gap in explicitly promoting critical thinking skills, except when accompanied by the reflective, student-centered approaches.

According to Bell, 2010, PBL is the most effective technique to enable students apply their knowledge and skills to solve issues in their daily lives. This fosters autonomy, curiosity and a deeper understanding. By allowing students develop their own questions, make decisions and collaboratively solve meaningful problems, PBL nurtures higher order thinking skills. Larmer& Mergendoller (2010), Similarly advocate for PBL as a student-centered, teacher-facilitated approach where real-world connections ignite deeper understanding and critical analysis.

However, Turner (2018), notes that, while PBL has been a widely an adopted model in the STEM fields, due to its natural alignment with inquiry, its implementation in the humanities such as history and political education can be more complex. Teachers may struggle to design projects that connect the past content to the current realities in meaningful ways yet its this connection that promotes application, analysis and evaluation, skills central to critical thinking.

Despite how promising real-world connections in PBL is, challenges still remain. Rosenzweig (2000), found out that, although history shapes how people think, a few students derive meaningful insights from the school history lessons. Foster, Ashby, and Lee (2008), observed that many students often struggle to connect past historical knowledge to present and

future issues, indicating a need for more intentional teaching strategies. Van Straaten et'al (2018), also noted that the highest percentage of students rarely use historical knowledge to substantiate opinions on current issues, this indicates a gap in helping learners critically link the past to the present. Therefore, the existing literature underscores the potentials of real-world connections with in PBL in enhancing students critical thinking skills. however, most of these evidences come from foreign or STEM focused contexts, a gap this study aims to fill by establishing the relationship between real-world connections within PBL and students critical thinking skills, particularly in the context of Ugandan history and political education in secondary schools.

2.5 Literature Gap

PBL facilitates critical thinking of learners once monitored and evaluated. Scholars such as (Zhang, 2023), (Lim et al., 2023) and Van Straaten et'al (2018) among others in their studies emphasize how PBL contributes on critical thinking in the vocational and technical subjects, thus leaves a gap for history and political education. PBL and critical thinking is dominated by foreign studies and therefore leaves a geographical gap on how the already established results relate with this study, hence a need to close the gap by conducting the study in the Ugandan context. The conceptualization of critical thinking in terms of analysis, evaluation and application was not given a comprehensive attention like this study intends. The theory in this study is constructivism which is different from what other scholars used like connectivism theory. The use of constructivism theory as a lens is novelty, for this study underpins PBL and critical thinking in history and political education in Ugandan secondary schools. History and political education have not been well explored in terms of pedagogy with the PBL to support critical thinking of students.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter delves into methodology employed in investigating PBL and students' critical thinking skills among secondary school students in history and political education lessons in Mukono district. This chapter outlines the; research design, study population, sampling procedures to select participants, data collection methods, data collection tool and data analysis. This chapter also addresses ethical considerations and quality control technique explicitly reliability and validity of data.

3.1 Research Approach

The study took on a quantitative research approach with positivism paradigm. The quantitative approach involves collection of data in numerical form from the participants (Cress well, 2018). Positivism paradigm undertakes the quantitative responses within the study. The quantitative approach is suitable to engage students as primary sole stakeholders to inform their critical thinking in history and political education lessons as outcomes of PBL which is required in this study. The need to engage larger population justifies the feasibility of the quantitative approach in this study.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a correlational research design. The correlational research design involves establishment of the relationship between independent and dependent variables under the study (Creswell, 2018). The design is suitable for engagement of a larger sample size to support generalization of the findings of this study. The ability to take on large numbers makes it a feasible approach to examine the way PBL relates to the students critical thinking in history and political education lessons in secondary schools.

3.3 Population

The target population is 10 secondary schools in Goma division, Mukono districts. The sub-country has 6 private and 4 government secondary schools (Mukono District Education Report, 2025). In addition, students at 'O' level represented by senior three and four formed the units of inquiry for this study. The identified classes have wide exposure on the project-based learning since they have already gathered results from their project tasks which reflects their exposure to this study. In this study, 440 students explicitly from senior three and four will be involved in the study as end users of the project-based learning in secondary schools. The students are in suitable position to discern information about PBL and their critical thinking abilities in history lessons at school.

3.4 Sampling Size

Sample size is part of elements selected to represent the entire population (Creswell, 2018). The study population consisted of 440 students from four secondary schools selected for the study, a sample size of 205 students was selected using the Krejci and Morgan table of 1970. The 205 students were distributed in the two classes (senior three and senior four). History is compulsory at 'O' level. These are candidates and semi-candidate for final assessment of UNEB.

Table 3.1: Study population, sample size and sampling technique

Category of respondents	Target population	Sample size	Sampling technique
Senior three students	240	112	Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling.
Senior four students	200	093	Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling.
Total	440	205	Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling.

Source: Primary data (2025)

3.5 Sampling Technique

The study employed stratified random sampling to ensure a fair representation across schools and class levels. Schools were first stratified according to school ownership (government and private) from each stratum, 2 schools were randomly selected, giving each school within its category an equal chance of inclusion in the study. Senior 3 and 4 constituted the strata from which participants were drawn. Simple random sampling was employed to provide equal chances to participant selection in the study. Throughout the process, a total of 205 students were randomly selected to participate in this study and to respond to the questionnaire.

3.6 Data Collection Method

The study used primary data collection method with use of survey. Data collection method is a way in which data is gathered for the study (Creswell, 2018). The primary data collection method involves collection of data for the first time in the field. It provides first-hand information to answer the research questions for the study.

3.7 Data Collection Tool

The study used the survey questionnaire data collection tool. The questionnaires had close ended questions structured in line with the variables of the study. The questionnaires were self-administered to students after seeking permission from the school authorities in each secondary school. The close-ended questions consisted of a Likert scale ranging from 1(strongly disagree), 2(disagree), 3(not sure), 4(agree) and 5(strongly agree) which was intends to address how PBL relates to students critical thinking in history and political education lessons. The questionnaires were administered to 205 students selected from the secondary schools.

3.8 Data Quality Assurance

3.8.1 Reliability of Data Collection Tool

Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of a data collection instrument (Ishtiaq, 2019). The reliable instrument produces consistent results when used repeatedly under similar conditions, ensuring that the data is trustworthy and dependable. The internal consistency measures the extent to which different items within the instrument are measuring the same construct in the study. The Cronbach alpha reliability analysis was run in Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) version 12. The acceptable cut off is 0.70 on Cronbach alpha on pre-tested data (Creswell, 2018). The pre-testing of the data collection tools supports evaluation of the line questions before full scale data collection which support reliability of the data collected by the questionnaires.

3.8.2 Validity of Data Collection Tool

Validity refers to the extent to which a data collection tool accurately measures what it's intended to measure, while reliability indicates the consistency and dependability of the tool's results (Creswell, 2018). In this study, content validity was measured to assess if the items are represented in the data collection tool specifically questionnaires. The valid instrument provides accurate and meaningful data, ensuring that the research findings are relevant and reliable. The desired coefficient on the validity of the questionnaires is when content validity index is above 0.75 (Creswell, 2018). The content validity index (CVI) will be determined using the formula:

$$\text{CVI} = \frac{Number\ of\ Questions\ which\ are\ relevant}{Total\ number\ of\ questions}$$

The questionare were reviewed by experts who evaluated the relevance of each item to the research objectives. Pre-testing of the questionnaires was conducted at a nearby secondary school that is not part of the main study sample but share similar characteristics.

3.9 Data Analysis Technique

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics-IBM SPSS statistics, a Pearson correlation coefficient test was conducted on the variables to measure relationship between collaborative PBL activities and the levels of students critical thinking skills in history and political education, relationship between student autonomy and the levels of critical thinking skills in history and political education and the relationship between real-world connections with in PBL activities and the levels of critical thinking in history and political education. The Pearson correlation analysis determined the magnitude to which PBL constructs relate with students critical thinking at schools.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were carefully addressed, informed consent forms were availed to participants involved in the study, confidentiality of the information and anonymity of the participants in the study was addressed.

The researcher acquired an introductory letter from the university to educate the respondents on the relevance of carrying out the study. The participants had a right to withdraw their participation at will at any time as they deemed necessary.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the quantitative data collected to establish relationship between Project-based learning and students critical thinking skills in history and political education, in selected secondary schools in Goma division, Mukono district. A total of 205 close ended questionares were distributed to senior three and senior four students in 2 private and 2 government schools, 198 were fully completed and deemed valid for analysis, yielding a response rate of 96.6%, the 7 were excluded due to incomplete sections which were missing critical data to establish relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The data was analyzed using SPSS and is presented using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

The chapter is organized according to the study objectives and hypotheses, it begins with the descriptive statistics on the demographic information of the respondents, descriptive statistics of project-based learning and critical thinking skills and then the inferential analysis that is: relationship between PBL and critical thinking skills.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Tables in 4.1 summarize the background information of 198 respondents in terms of Gender, Class, Age, School type and if they had ever done any project in history and political education.

4.1.1 Gender distribution of respondents.

Table 4.1: Gender distribution of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	113	57.1
Female	85	42.9
Total	198	100.0

Table 4.1 and figure 4.1 show that majority of the respondents were male with 51.7% total sample while the females were made up of 42.9% representation. This indicates that the sample was slightly male dominated although both genders were represented, this is partly because one of the sampled schools was purely a boy's school.

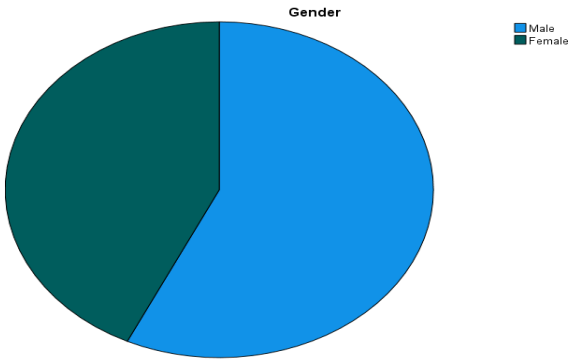

Figure 4.1: Gender distribution of respondents (Pie chart)

4.1.2 Class distribution of respondents.

Table 4.2: Class distribution of respondents

Class	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Senior three	110	55.6
Senior four	88	44.4
Total	198	100.0

Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 show that, majority of the respondents were from senior three comprising 55.6% (110) of the total sample, while 44.4% (88) were in senior four. This indicates a fairly balanced representation of students from both class levels, although participation from senior three was slightly higher.

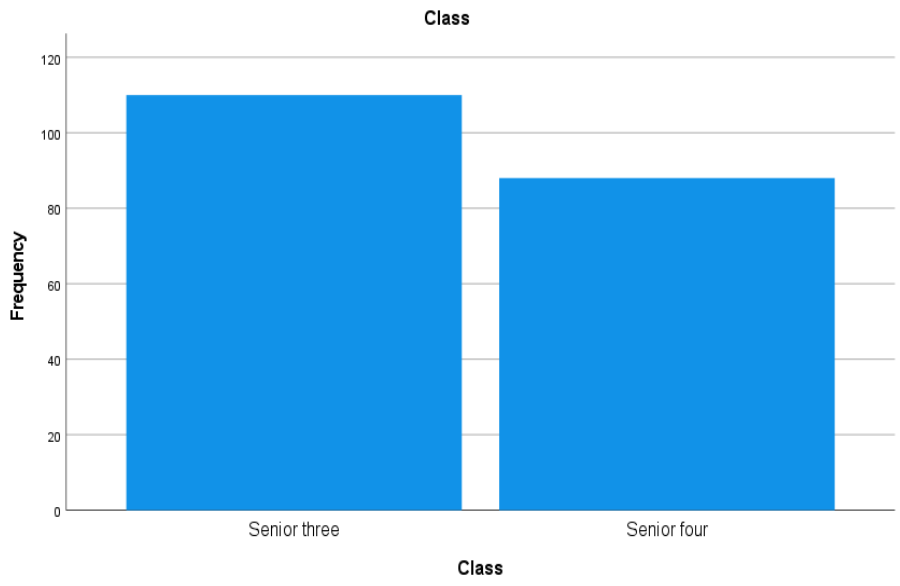

Figure 4.2: Class distribution of respondents (bar graph)

4.1.3 Age distribution of respondents

Table 4.3: Age distribution of respondents.

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
13-15 years	28	14.1
16-20 years	170	85.9
Total	198	100.0

Table 4.3 and figure 4.3 show that majority of the respondents (85.9%) were aged between 16-20 years while 14.1% were aged between 13-15 years, this indicates that most participants were in the age range of 16-20 years particularly those in senior three and four.

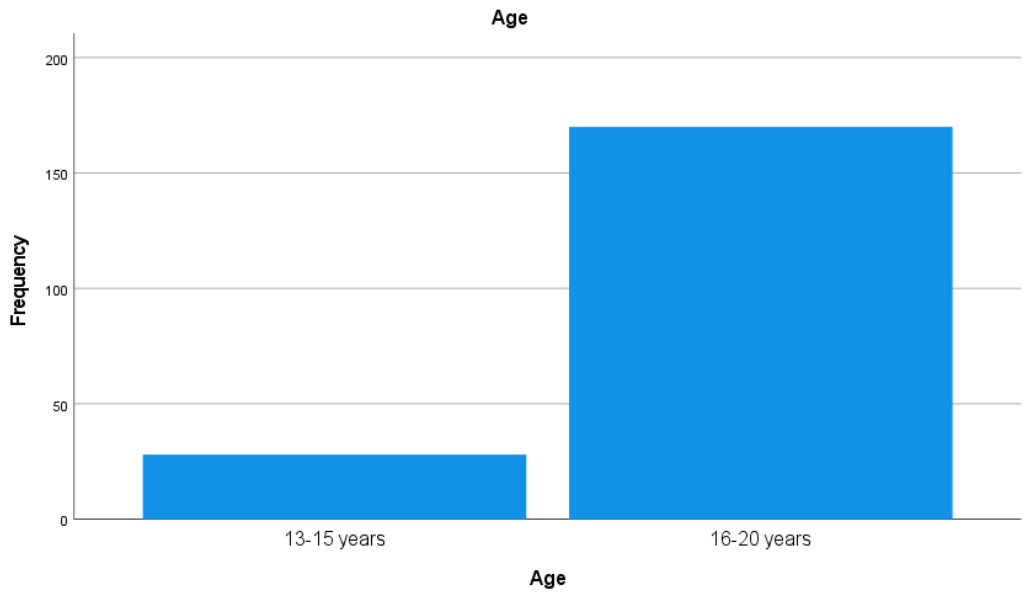

Figure 4.3: Age distribution of respondents (bar graph)

4.1.4 School type distribution of respondents.

Table 4.4: Status of the school distribution of respondents.

Status of the school	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Private	99	50.0
Government	99	50.0
Total	198	100.0

Table 4.4 and figure 4.4 show the distribution of respondents by school type, with 50.0% (99) from private schools and 50.0% (99) from Government schools, this indicates an equal representation of respondents from different educational settings.

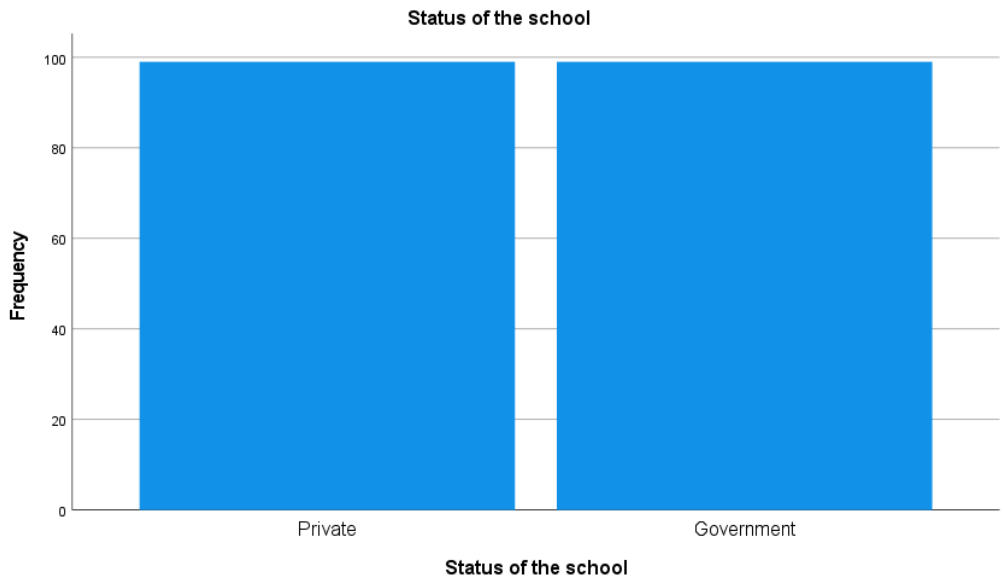

Figure 4.4: School type distribution of respondents.

4.1.5 Distribution of respondents based on project done in history and political education.

Table 4.5: Distribution of respondents based on project done in history and political education.

Done a project in history and political education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	86	43.4
No	112	56.6
Total	198	100.0

Table 4.5 and figure 4.5 show that 43.4% (86) of the respondents had participated in projects in history and political education, while 56.6% (112) had not. This indicates that more than half of the students had not engaged in project-based activities in the subject.

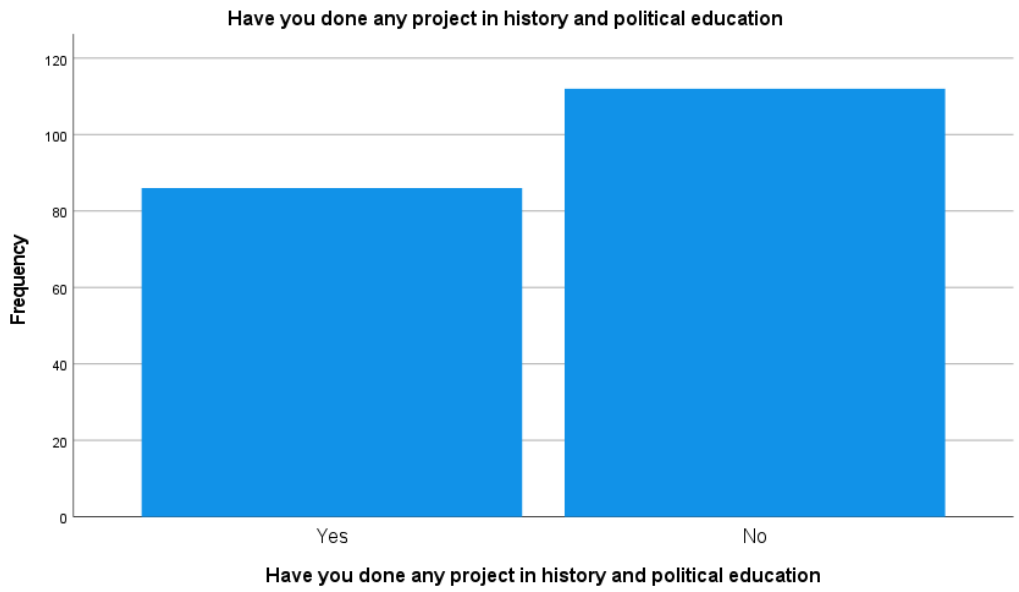

Figure 4.5: Distribution of respondents based on project done in history and political education.

4.2 Descriptive statistics of Project-based learning (PBL) items.

This section presents the descriptive statistics of the respondents' views on Project-based learning (PBL), measured using Likert scale items. The analysis focuses on the mean scores and standard deviations for each item to identify general trends in students experiences and perceptions of PBL in history and political education. The items are grouped into three PBL aspects: Collaborative activities, Student autonomy and real-world connections, to provide a clear understanding of each aspect.

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics for collaborative activities items.

Table 4.6: Descriptive statistics for collaborative activities items.

Item No	Item statements on collaborative activities	Mean	Standard deviation
C1	I work well in groups with other students.	4.41	0.773
C2	My ideas are respected during group work	4.13	0.886
C3	I take part in class discussions during group work	4.39	0.797
C4	I help answer questions in group activities	4.37	0.855
C5	I help organize group work with others	4.16	0.929
C6	I contribute useful information in group tasks	4.31	0.802
C7	I cooperate with others in project activities	4.11	1.006
C8	I give helpful feedback to my group	4.23	0.816
C9	I share my views about what we are doing in a project.	4.14	1.065

Table 4.6 shows that the mean scores for collaborative activities items ranged from 4.11 to 4.41, indicating a generally strong agreement among students regarding the use of collaborative strategies in history and political education.

The highest mean score recorded for item C1 “I work well in groups with other students” was (*M*=4.41, *SD*=0.773), suggesting a strong engagement in group activities. Similarly, C3 “I take part in class discussions during group work” (*M*=4.39, *SD*=0.797) and C4 “I help answer questions in group activities” (*M*=4.37, *SD*=0.855), also received high ratings, emphasizing that collaboration forms part of students’ learning experiences.

The lowest mean score recorded for item C7 “I cooperate with others in project activities” was (*M*=4.11, *SD*=1.006), still reflecting a positive agreement, although slightly lower than the other items.

Standard deviations ranged from 0.773 to 1.065, with most items falling below 1.0, indicating a high level of consistency in students’ responses. Item C9 “I share my views about what we are doing in a project” (*SD*=1.065), revealed the greatest variation, suggesting a moderate difference in students’ responses on this item.

4.2.2 Descriptive statistics for student autonomy items.

Table 4.7: Descriptive statistics for student autonomy items.

Item No	Item statements on student autonomy	Mean	Standard deviations
S1	I find answers to questions on my own	3.69	1.259
S2	I focus on my own interests in learning	3.83	1.243
S3	I learn at my own pace	3.80	1.389
S4	I go back to review topics when I need to	4.05	1.112
S5	I make good decisions during group projects	3.99	0.945
S6	I can explain problems clearly	3.84	1.047
S7	I take part in tasks freely	3.92	1.110
S8	I reflect on what I learned in each topic	3.82	1.121
S9	I can spot what I missed in my work	3.82	1.202

Table 4.7 shows that the mean scores for student autonomy items ranged from 3.69 to 4.05, indicating a generally high agreement among students regarding their involvement in independent learning and decision making in history and political education projects and lessons.

The highest mean score recorded for item S4" I go back to review topics when I need to" was (*M*=4.05, *SD*=1.112), indicating that many students take responsibility of their own learning during projects. In contrast, the lowest mean score recorded for item S1 "I find answers to questions on my own" was (*M*=3.69, *SD*=1.259), indicating a slightly lower agreement on this aspect of student autonomy.

Standard deviations ranged from 0.945 to 1.389, with most items above 1.0, indicating a moderate variation in responses despite overall agreement.

Item S3 "I learn at my own pace" (*SD*=1.389), had the highest variation in responses, suggesting that students' views on this item were more mixed compared to others.

4.2.3 Descriptive statistics for Real-world connections items.

Table 4.8: Descriptive statistics for Real-world connections items.

Item No	Item statements on Real-world connections	Mean	Standard deviations
R1	I explore solutions to real-life history problems	3.70	1.213
R2	I gather information from different sources for my projects	4.03	1.040
R3	I can explain the results of my history projects	3.77	1.116
R4	I show that I understand history through tasks I do	3.98	1.080
R5	I participate in debates in history class	3.26	1.428
R6	I use what I learn in real-world situations	3.81	1.188
R7	I have skills to solve real problems in projects	3.87	1.090
R8	I think of new ideas while doing projects	4.10	1.000
R9	I use deep thinking when working on history tasks.	3.91	1.217

Table 4.8 shows that the mean scores for real-world connections items ranged from 3.26 to 4.10, indicating a moderate agreement among students regarding the incorporation of real-life experiences into History and political education projects and lessons.

The highest mean score recorded for item R8 “I think of new ideas while doing projects” was (*M*=4.10, *SD* = 1.000), indicating that many students acknowledged the link between project work and real-life contexts. This was closely followed by R2 “I gather information from different sources for my project” (*M*=4.03, *SD*=1.040), and R4 “I show that I understand history through tasks I do” (*M*=3.98, *SD*=1.080), both of which also received high ratings, indicating that projects often involve relevant and meaningful contexts. In contrast, R5 “I participate in debates in history class” (*M*=3.26, *SD*=1.428), recorded the lowest mean score and the highest variability in responses. This indicates a lower agreement and suggests that students experience with debates varied widely, possibly due to differences in classroom practices across schools.

The standard deviations ranged from 1.000 to 1.428, reflecting diverse opinions on the extent to which real-world connections were made in history and political education projects.

4.3 Descriptive statistics for critical thinking skills items

This section presents the descriptive statistics of the respondents’ perceptions of their critical thinking skills in history and political education, based on the Likert scale items. The analysis focused on the mean scores and standard deviations to determine the extent to which students engaged in critical thinking. The items were organized under three sub-themes; Analysis, Application and Evaluation, to provide a clearer understanding of each aspect. In this context, the mean represents the general level of agreement with each item, while standard deviation indicates the variability in students’ responses.

4.3.1 Descriptive statistics for Analysis items.

Table 4.9: Descriptive statistics for Analysis items.

Item No	Item statements on Analysis	Mean	Standard deviations
A1	I can I dentify the main idea in a history task	4.16	0.947
A2	I can point out both the strength and weaknesses in what I learn	4.12	0.998
A3	I think about different ways to understand a topic or task	4.28	0.861
A4	I connect the task to what I have already learned	4.28	0.890
A5	Iam able to create a history project on my own	3.41	1.286

Table 4.9 shows that the mean scores for analysis items ranged from 3.41 to 4.28 indicating that students generally exhibited a high level of agreement with statements related to analytical thinking in history and political education projects.

The highest mean scores recorded for item A3 "I think about different ways to understand a topic or task" was (*M*=4.28, *SD*=0.861) and item A4 "I connect the task to what I have already learned" (*M*=4.28, *SD*=0.890), suggesting that many students actively engage in examining historical tasks from different perspectives and making informed judgements. Similarly, items A1 "I can identify the main idea in a history task" (*M*=4.16, *SD*=0.947) and item A2 "I can point out both the strength and weaknesses in what I learn" (*M*=4.12, *SD*=0.998), also received favorable ratings reflecting that the analytical skills are well-developed during history and political education projects.

The lowest mean score recorded for item A5 "I am able to create a history project on my own" was (*M*=3.41, *SD*=1.286), which not only indicates a moderate level of agreement but also reflects the highest variation in responses. This suggests that students had diverse experiences and levels of confidence regarding independent project work.

Standard deviations for most items ranged from 0.861 to 0.998, reflecting a high level of consistency in students' responses, with the exception of item A5 which had the highest *SD* (1.286), indicating a wider spread in responses.

4.3.2 Descriptive statistics for Application items

Table 4.10: Descriptive statistics for Application items

Item No	Item statements on Application	Mean	Standard deviations
AP1	I know how to research on a given topic	4.22	1.018
AP2	I learn on my own when needed	4.24	0.966
AP3	I understand how to use history knowledge in real life	3.92	1.068
AP4	I understand topics better when I work on projects	3.68	1.265
AP5	I find better ways to solve problems in history	3.94	1.036

Table 4.10 shows that the mean scores for application items ranged from 3.68 to 4.24, indicating a generally high level of agreement among students regarding their ability to apply historical knowledge in given contexts.

The highest mean score recorded for item AP2 “I learn on my own when needed” was (*M*=4.24, *SD*=0.966), closely followed by item AP1 “I know how to research on a given topic” (*M*=4.22, *SD*=1.018), suggesting that students feel confident applying historical knowledge independently.

The lowest mean score recorded for item AP4 “I understand topics better when I work on projects” was (*M*=3.68, *SD*=1.265**)**, indicating a moderate agreement and the highest variability in responses. This suggests that students’ experiences with applying knowledge through projects differs across learning contexts.

Standard deviations for most items ranged from 0.966 to 1.068, reflecting a moderate level of consistency in students’ responses. The highest SD for item AP4 indicates greater variability in students’ perceptions of how projects enhance their understanding.

4.3.3 Descriptive statistics for Evaluation items

Table 4.11: Descriptive statistics for evaluation items.

Item No	**Item statements on Evaluation.**	**Mean**	**Standard deviations.**
E1	I think about what I can improve on in my work	4.26	0.897
E2	I notice the assumptions made in historical tasks	3.94	0.908
E3	I understand the arguments in history topics	4.07	1.015
E4	I make informed decisions about solutions in my work	4.13	0.914
E5	I connect my own ideas to what iam learning	4.36	1.026

Table 4.11 shows that the mean scores for Evaluation items ranged from 3.94 to 4.36, indicating a generally high level of agreement with statements related to making judgements, decisions and drawing conclusions in history and political education projects.

The highest mean recorded for item E5 “I connect my own ideas to what iam learning” was (*M*=4.36, *SD*=1.026), Similarly, item E1 “I think about what I can improve on in my work” (*M*=4.26, *SD*=0.897) and item E4 “I make informed decisions about solutions in my work” (*M*=4.13, *SD*=0.914), also received high ratings. These results suggest that students are confident in evaluating and reflecting on historical knowledge.

The lowest mean score recorded for item E2 “I notice the assumptions made in history topics” was *(M*=3.94, *SD*=0.908), Although this mean is relatively lower, it still reflects a generally positive agreement among students, with consistent responses.

The standard deviations for all items ranged from 0.897 to 1.026, reflecting a moderate level of consistency in responses. The highest variability was observed in items E5 (*SD*=1.026) and E3 (*SD*=1.015), suggesting that while students generally agreed with these statements, their level of confidence in evaluating tasks varied slightly.

4.4 Inferential Statistics

This section presents the results of the Pearson product moment correlation analysis that was conducted to examine the relationship between PBL and students critical thinking skills in history and political education. The analysis was guided by the following null hypotheses:

> **$H_0$1**: There is no significant relationship between collaborative PBL activities and the levels of students critical thinking skills in history and political education.
>
> **$H_0$2**: There is no significant relationship between student autonomy in PBL and students critical thinking skills in history and political education.

$H_0$3: There is no significant relationship between real-world connections with in PBL activities and the levels of students' critical thinking skills in history and political education

To test these hypotheses, average scores were computed for each of the three PBL dimensions (Collaborative activities, student autonomy and real-world connections) and for students' Critical thinking skills. A Pearson correlation test was then performed to determine the strength, direction and significance of the relationship between each PBL component and students critical thinking skills. The results are presented in the tables below.

4.4.1 Relationship between collaborative PBL activities and students critical thinking skills

Table 4.12: Pearson correlation between collaborative PBL activities and students critical thinking skills.

Variable	r-value	p-value
Collaborative PBL activities vs Critical thinking skills	r=0.323	p<0.001

Table 4.12 shows that the correlation between collaborative PBL activities and students' critical thinking skills was positive (r=0.323, p<0.001). The p-value being less than 0.01 indicates that the result is statistically significant. This implies that higher levels of collaboration in PBL are associated with improved critical thinking skills among students. Therefore, the null hypotheses was rejected.

4.4.2 Relationship between student autonomy in PBL and students critical thinking skills

Table 4.13: Pearson correlation between student autonomy in PBL and students critical thinking skills.

Variable	r-value	p-value
Student autonomy in PBL vs critical thinking skills	r=0.412	P=<0.001

Table 4.13 shows a positive correlation between student autonomy and students' critical thinking skills (r=0.412, p<0.001). The result is statistically significant, indicating that higher levels of student autonomy are associated with improved critical thinking skills. Therefore, the null hypotheses was rejected.

4.4.3 Relationship between Real-world connections in PBL and students critical thinking skills.

Table 4.14: Pearson correlation between real-world connections in PBL and students critical thinking skills.

Variable	r-value	p-value
Real-world connections in PBL vs Critical thinking skills	r=0.609	p=<0.001

Table 4.14 shows a positive correlation between real-world connections in PBL activities and students' critical thinking skills (r=0.609, p=<0.001). The result is statistically significant, indicating that integrating real-world relevance in PBL activities enhances students' critical thinking skills. There for, the null hypotheses was rejected.

4.4.4 Relationship between PBL and students critical thinking skills

Table 4.15: Pearson correlation between project-based learning and students critical thinking skills.

Variable	r-value	p-value
PBL vs Critical thinking skills	r=0.540	p=<0.001

Table 4.15 shows a positive correlation between overall PBL practices and students' critical thinking skills (r=0.540, p=<0.001). The result is statistically significant, indicating that, in general, higher engagement in PBL is associated with enhanced critical thinking skills

4.5 Chapter Summery

The Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the components of PBL and students' critical thinking skills. The results revealed a moderate positive correlation between collaborative PBL activities and critical thinking skills (r=0.323, p<0.001), and between student autonomy and critical thinking skills (r=0.412, p=<0.001). A strong positive correlation was observed between real-world connections in PBL and critical thinking skills (r=0.609, p=<0.001), as well as between the overall PBL and critical thinking skills (r=0.540, p=<0.001). These findings led to rejection of all three null hypotheses, indicating that each PBL component significantly contributes to the development of students' critical thinking skills in History and Political Education.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the key findings in relation to the study objectives and existing literature, also draws conclusions based on findings and presents practical recommendations for educators, curriculum developers and policy makers. The study sought to establish relationship between PBL and students critical thinking skills in history and political education in selected secondary schools in Goma division, Mukono district. The study objectives were:

1. To establish how collaborative PBL activities enhance students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.
2. To assess how student autonomy in PBL fosters students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.
3. To establish how real-world connections with in PBL activities enhance students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

5.1.1 Objective 1: To establish how collaborative PBL activities enhance students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.

The findings of the study revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between collaborative PBL activities and students critical thinking skills. (r=0.323, p=<0.001).

This suggests that students who engage more in collaborative PBL tasks such as group projects, discussions and team-based learning in History and Political education, tend to exhibit higher levels of critical thinking skills such as analysis, application and evaluation, compared to situations where they work individually.

These findings are supported by the work of researchers such as Blumfeld et' al (1992), who argued that cognitive participation increases when learners are presented with collaborative tasks in PBL that encourage them articulate, explain and defend their ideas, thereby enhancing their analytical and evaluative abilities. Schoenberger-orgad and spiller (2014) also emphasize that collaborative activities such as group discussions and team work during learning are central to the development of critical thinking skills.

A study by Ochoa and Robinson (2005), found that structured peer interactions and group consensus during PBL activities promote higher order thinking, as group members challenge each other's viewpoints, negotiate ideas, justify reasoning, and critically evaluate multiple perspectives, to find alternative solutions. This process is vital in developing the ability to analyze and evaluate information critically. Chua and Manalo (2020) also observed that collaborative inquiry approaches including both problem-based learning and project-based learning, significantly improve students' thinking and reasoning skills, particularly in analysis, evaluation and synthesis. Their study also reported a positive correlation between students' perceptions of these approaches and their performance outcomes, indicating that when learners deeply engage with collaborative tasks, they develop stronger critical thinking skills.

Therefore, this study affirms that peer interactions during project work provides a foundation for deeper reasoning and interpretation of historical issues.

5.1.2 Objective 2: To assess how student autonomy in PBL fosters students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.

The study revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between student autonomy and students' critical thinking skills. (r=0.412, p=<0.001). This indicates that when students are given independence and decision-making power in learning tasks, their ability to analyze, evaluate and apply historical knowledge improves. Autonomous learners take responsibility for

their learning, make reflective decisions and engage more deeply with content, all of which contribute to the development of critical thinking skills.

This outcome aligns with Nunan's (1997) assertion that student autonomy fosters learner responsibility, decision-making, and self-drive, which cultivate higher order thinking such as critical thinking skills. Magendoller (2010), similarly observed that student driven inquiry in PBL cultivates deeper understanding and cognitive abilities.

A recent study by Tran Thi My Hanh (2023), observed that in EFL classrooms, PBL enhanced learners' autonomy, leading to an increased engagement, self-directed learning and critical thinking skills. Students who exercised choice in project topics and had control over how they completed tasks, demonstrated higher levels of reasoning, problem solving and analytical thinking.

This study therefore, supports that autonomy in project work allows students to take ownership of their learning, reflect on their decisions and engage critically with historical content. This highlights the importance of designing History and Political Education tasks that provide guidance while enabling student independence, fostering both engagement and critical thinking.

5.1.3 Objective 3: To establish how real-world connections with in PBL activities enhance students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.

The correlation between real-world connections within PBL activities and critical thinking skills revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship. (r=0.609, p=<0.001), This means that when students relate projects in history and political education to real world situations or contemporary issues, their ability to think critically is significantly enhanced. These findings are supported by Bell (2010), who asserted that PBL encourages learners to apply critical thinking skills in solving their daily real-life issues. Similarly, Lamer & Magendoller (2010), emphasize

how meaningful real-world connections ignite deeper understanding and analysis to learners. Furthermore, Nisha (2024) reinforces this position by arguing that PBL nurtures critical thinking by engaging students in complex, real-world challenges that require inquiry, evidence evaluation, and decision-making. She explains that the ambiguity inherent in such tasks mirrors real-life scenarios, fostering resilience, adaptability, and the ability to think under pressure. Collaborative engagement within these contexts further enables learners to consider multiple perspectives, thereby broadening their analytical capacity. Similarly, Ehlers (2024) notes that engaging learners with real-world problems fosters critical thinking by requiring them to analyze, evaluate, and reason through complex situations. While his study focused on higher education, the principles are transferable to secondary school settings, since engaging with authentic problems equally strengthens reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.

This study therefore indicates that learner engagement in real-life activities and projects in history and political education enhances not only their engagement but also their ability to assess historical events based on present day realities. By situating learning in authentic contexts, PBL sharpens students' capacity to analyze, synthesize, and apply knowledge critically.

5.1.4 General relationship between PBL and critical thinking skills

The overall correlation between PBL and students' critical thinking skills revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship. (r=0.540, p=<0.001), This implies that increased implementation of PBL strategies is highly associated with improved critical thinking skills among students in history and political education.

The general literature body supports that PBL fosters development of 21st century skills such as critical thinking skills.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were made;

1. Collaborative PBL activities enhance students' critical thinking skills as they create learning environments where learners discuss historical issues, exchange ideas, justify their reasoning and make informed judgements through peer feedback and group projects in history and political education.
2. Student autonomy in PBL promotes independent thinking and ownership of learning in history and political education, as it allows learners make independent decisions, plan learning activities and make reasoned judgements.
3. Relating PBL activities into real-life historical and political contexts enhances students' critical thinking skills. Authentic and practical learning tasks make history and political content more engaging, meaningful, relevant and applicable, therefore, enabling learners analyze contemporary historical issues.
4. Overall, PBL is a valuable pedagogical approach for nurturing critical thinking skills in history and political education. By integrating collaborative activities, student autonomy and real-world connections, PBL shifts instruction from teacher-centered transmission to student-centered inquiry thus foster critical thinking and problem-solving which are essential competencies in the world today.

5.3 Hypotheses Testing

$H_0$1: There is no significant relationship between collaborative PBL activities and the levels of students' critical thinking skills in history and political education.

This hypothesis was rejected because the Pearson correlation coefficient r=0.323, with a significant level of p<0.001, indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship. This suggests that collaborative PBL activities promote development of students' critical thinking skills, hence a relationship.

$H_0$2: There is no significant relationship between student autonomy in PBL and students critical thinking skills in history and political education.

This hypothesis was rejected because the Pearson correlation coefficient r=0.412, with a significant level of p=<0.001, indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship. This suggests that student autonomy in PBL fosters students' critical thinking skills, hence a relationship.

$H_0$3: There is no significant relationship between real-world connections with in PBL activities and the levels of students' critical thinking skills in history and political education

This hypothesis was rejected because the Pearson correlation coefficient r=0.609, with a significance of p=<0.001, indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship. This means that when PBL tasks are connected to real-life issues, students get more engaged and able to think critically and analyze historical events, hence a relationship.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations have been presented.

1. Due to limited prior exposure to PBL in some schools, this study recommends the Ministry of Education and sports, NCDC, and school administrators to provide capacity building workshops for History and Political Education teachers, particularly in schools with fewer instructional resources, for all learners to equitably benefit from PBL approaches.
2. Due to limited learning materials and limited access to enrichment activities by some schools, partnerships should be developed with local communities, museums, archives

and civic institutions to support authentic, low cost, real-world learning activities that promote inquiry and critical thinking.

3. Teachers should integrate more collaborative projects in history and political education to foster team work and critical discussions.
4. Learners should be granted the opportunity to take charge of their own learning through decision making in project activities in order to foster critical thinking skills.
5. Educators should integrate more of the relevant contemporary situations in project activities in history and political education as it engages learners cognitively and fosters historical arguments as they relate the present events to the past events.
6. Curriculum developers should design history lessons that promote student autonomy, giving learners time to plan, investigate and present findings.
7. School administrators should support real-world oriented PBL initiatives such as community-based projects, debates on current issues and historical simulations such as visiting museums.

5.5 Contributions of the Study

The study adds to the existing body of knowledge on the relationship between project-based learning (PBL) and students' critical thinking skills. By providing empirical evidence on how collaborative activities, student autonomy, and real-world connections within PBL enhance students' ability to apply, analyze and evaluate historical knowledge, the study strengthens the scholarly underpinnings of PBL in secondary school humanities.

The study provides evidence in support of constructivist learning theories, particularly learner-centered pedagogies that emphasize active learning. The findings demonstrate that students achieve higher-order thinking skills when actively engaged in meaningful, real-world,

and collaborative learning tasks. This helps bridge the gap between traditional rote learning methods and competence-based learning approaches, particularly in the Ugandan context, where limited research has examined the influence of PBL on critical thinking in History and Political Education.

The study provides valuable insights for educators and curriculum developers. It highlights how the integration of PBL activities into history and political education can promote higher order-thinking skills among students, and thus provides practical guidance for the design and implementation of classroom strategies that foster critical thinking among learners.

The study contributes to future research by serving as a reference framework for other scholars examining similar relationships in different subject contexts or regions. The findings open up avenues for comparative studies across subjects and countries, encouraging further exploration of how PBL can be used to cultivate critical thinking skills in diverse educational settings.

5.6 Areas for Further Research

A qualitative follow up study to understand the in-depth perception of students on their development of critical thinking skills through PBL.

Investigation into challenges teachers face when implementing PBL in history and political education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Plagiarism Test Results

INFLUENCE OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING ON STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILL IN HISTORY LESSONS IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MUKONO DISTRICT

by ESTHER RACHAEL AKAREUT

Submission date: 22-Dec-2024 09:35PM (UTC+0100)
Submission ID: 2557438059
File name: AKAREUT_ESTHER_RACHAEL_PROPORSAL_Turnitin.docx (973.34K)
Word count: 6297
Character count: 37318

INFLUENCE OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING ON STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING SKILL IN HISTORY LESSONS IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MUKONO DISTRICT

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Appendix II: Questionnaire

Questionnaire for students in S.3 and S.4 (Project Based Learning)

Dear Respondent,

I am a student of Makerere University conducting a research study titled "Project-Based Learning and students Critical thinking skills in history and political education in selected secondary schools in Goma division, Mukono District". You have been selected as one of my key respondents in this study because I strongly believe you have the necessary information required for the study. You are kindly required to spare some time and fill this questionnaire. This information obtained will be treated with most confidentiality and anonymity.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

Please tick in the appropriate box provided

1. Gender

Male	Female
1	2

2. Class

Senior Three	Senior Four
1	2

3. Age

13-15 years	16-20 years
1	2

4.Status of the school

Private	Government
1	2

5. Have you done any project in history and political education?

Yes	No
1	2

SECTION B: PROJECT-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Please indicate by ticking your opinion on each statement using the given scale below, where, 1- **Strongly Disagree [SD], 2 -Disagree[D], 3 - Not Sure [NS], 4- Agree[A] and 5- Strongly Agree [SA].**

CODE	Statements on project-based learning activities.	SD	D	NS	A	SA
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Collaborative activities.					
C1	I work well in groups with other students.	1	2	3	4	5
C2	My ideas are respected during group work.	1	2	3	4	5
C3	I take part in class discussions during group work.	1	2	3	4	5
C4	I help answer questions in group activities	1	2	3	4	5
C5	I help organize group work with others	1	2	3	4	5
C6	I contribute useful information in group tasks	1	2	3	4	5
C7	I cooperate with others in project activities	1	2	3	4	5
C8	I give helpful feedback to my group	1	2	3	4	5
C9	I share my views about what we are doing in a project.	1	2	3	4	5
	Student autonomy					
S1	I find answers to questions on my own	1	2	3	4	5
S2	I focus on my own interests in learning	1	2	3	4	5
S3	I learn at my own pace	1	2	3	4	5
S4	I go back to review topics when I need to	1	2	3	4	5
S5	I make good decisions during group projects	1	2	3	4	5
S6	I can explain problems clearly	1	2	3	4	5
S7	I take part in tasks freely	1	2	3	4	5
S8	I reflect on what I learned in each topic	1	2	3	4	5
S9	I can spot what I missed in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
	Real-world connections					
R1	I explore solutions to real-life history problems	1	2	3	4	5
R2	I gather information from different sources for my projects	1	2	3	4	5
R3	I can explain the results of my history projects	1	2	3	4	5
R4	I show that I understand history through tasks I do	1	2	3	4	5
R5	I participate in debates in history class	1	2	3	4	5
R6	I use what I learn in real-world situations	1	2	3	4	5
R7	I have skills to solve real problems in projects	1	2	3	4	5
R8	I think of new ideas while doing projects	1	2	3	4	5
R9	I use deep thinking when working on history tasks.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C: CRITICAL THINKING.

CODE	Statements on critical thinking	SD	D	NS	A	SA
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Analysis.					
A1	I can identify the main idea in a history task	1	2	3	4	5
A2	I can point out both the strength and weaknesses in what I learn	1	2	3	4	5
A3	I think about different ways to understand a topic or task	1	2	3	4	5
A4	I connect the task to what I have already learned.	1	2	3	4	5
A5	Iam able to create a history project on my own.	1	2	3	4	5
	Application					
AP1	I know how to research on a given topic	1	2	3	4	5
AP2	I learn on my own when needed	1	2	3	4	5
AP3	I understand how to use history knowledge in real life	1	2	3	4	5
AP4	I understand topics better when I work on projects	1	2	3	4	5
AP5	I find better ways to solve problems in history	1	2	3	4	5
	Evaluation					
E1	I think about what i can improve on in my work	1	2	3	4	5
E2	I notice the assumptions made in historical tasks	1	2	3	4	5
E3	I understand the arguments in history topics	1	2	3	4	5
E4	I make informed decisions about solutions in my work	1	2	3	4	5
E5	I connect my own ideas to what iam learning	1	2	3	4	5

End

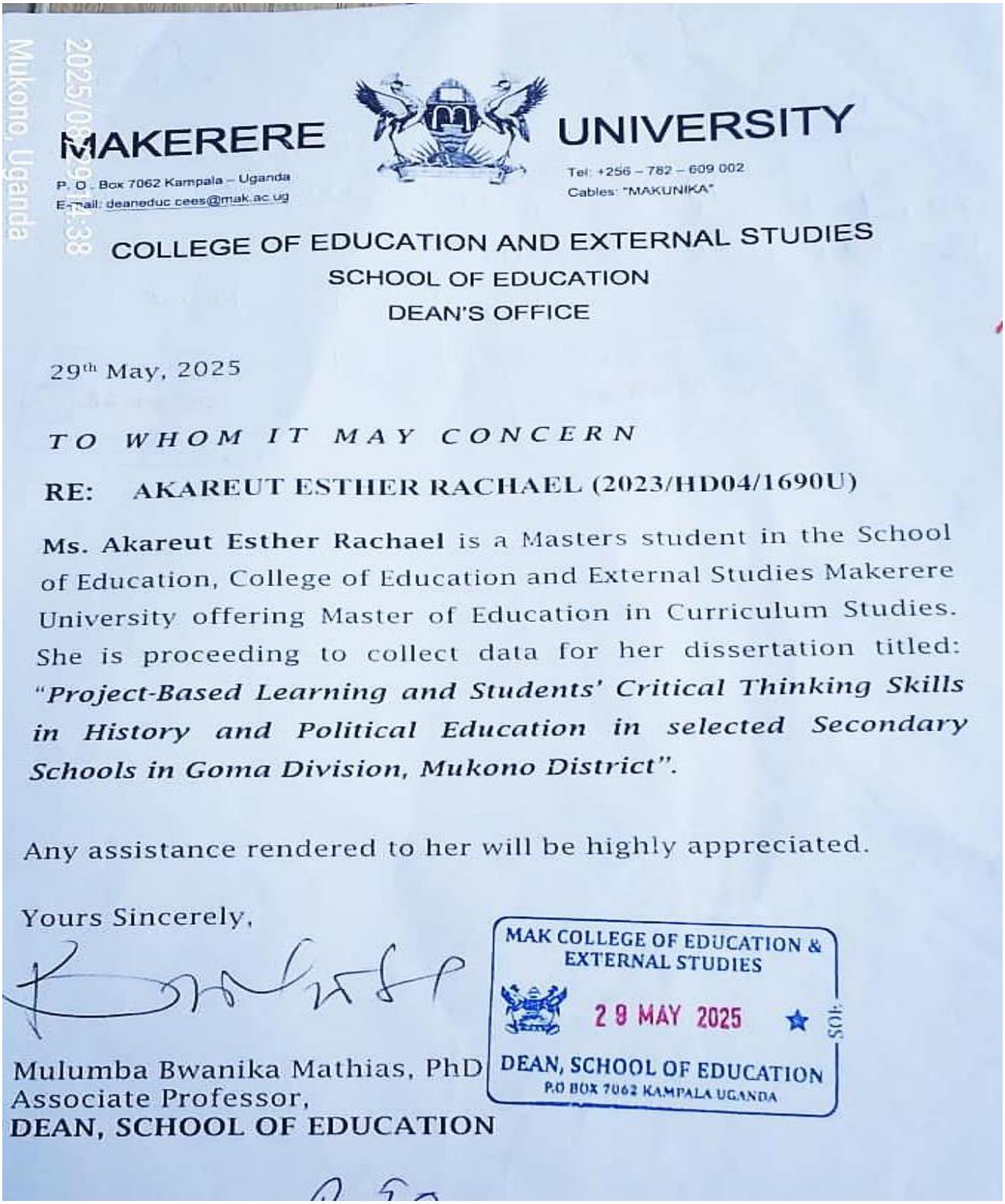
Appendix III: Krejcie & Morgan (1970)

N	*S*	*N*	*S*	*N*	*S*
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	1000000	384

Note.—*N* is population size. *S* is sample size.

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970

Appendix IV: Introductory Letter



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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND EXTERNAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
DEAN'S OFFICE

29th May, 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: AKAREUT ESTHER RACHAEL (2023/HD04/1690U)

Ms. Akareut Esther Rachael is a Masters student in the School of Education, College of Education and External Studies Makerere University offering Master of Education in Curriculum Studies. She is proceeding to collect data for her dissertation titled: ***"Project-Based Learning and Students' Critical Thinking Skills in History and Political Education in selected Secondary Schools in Goma Division, Mukono District".***

Any assistance rendered to her will be highly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

MAK COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & EXTERNAL STUDIES
29 MAY 2025
DEAN, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
P.O BOX 7062 KAMPALA UGANDA

Mulumba Bwanika Mathias, PhD
Associate Professor,
DEAN, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION