



The Use of Selected Collaborative Learning (CL) Strategies to Increase Student Motivation and
Improve Critical Thinking Ability in a Form Four Social Studies class at Harper Valley
Secondary School.

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Abstract

The study sets out to determine the effectiveness of Collaborative Learning (CL) Theory strategies at increasing motivation and problem solving among secondary school Social Studies students. Traditionally, Social Studies has been labelled as the ‘easy’ subject by students and educators. It is common to hear educators at my school suggest that students who display behavioral and academic challenges be ‘given’ Social Studies as a mandatory subject. However, though the subject did have a relatively high pass rate, over the last five years the pass rate has been declining and it is believed that students’ are struggling in the critical thinking questions and consequently demotivated. I am seeking to find suitable strategies to address these issue. Research is reviewed on the Expectancy-Value Theory of motivation and current research on Critical Thinking, as well as Kagan’s CL strategies as they relate to teaching and learning. Given the research is classroom based, a quasi-experimental action research model is used and data gathered through structured tests in critical thinking and student and teacher checklists. The overall results found that students were more receptive to the new strategies with incremental improvement in both areas of concern. I am also motivated to continue to pursue these and similar strategies in an effort to encourage and develop students problem solving dispositions and abilities over time.

Key words: Motivation, critical thinking, collaborative learning.