

Title: Enhancing Thinking Skills among Social Science Students through
Journal Writing in Geography (AGP1)
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Journal Name: Research Series
Journal Citation: No. 84
Publication Date: March 2006
Publication Type:

Abstract:

The study sought to describe the thinking skills manifested by students of Geography (AGP1) as reflected in their entries in the journals or thinking logs. Specifically, the study answered the following questions: 1) What are the student's thinking skills which are enhanced through journal writing? and 2) How do the students manifest the thinking skills as evidenced in their entries in the thinking logs or student journals?

This study involved 30 students during the first semester of the school year 2005-2006 at the Philippine Normal University, who were also members of the PNU-Geografica, a department-based student organization. The study covered seven selected thinking skills as cited by McGuinness (1999) in Wilson (2004).

Based on the students' entries, it was evident that the sophomore college students were able to perform the following skills under the eleven (11) categories of thinking skills used as framework of analysis: 1) Collecting information – Students entered in their journals new concepts and information they have learned from the course; 2) Sorting and analyzing information – They appeared to be able to reflect on the similarities and differences among various topics; 3) Drawing conclusions from the information – Students could draw conclusions from the information presented in the lessons discussed; 4) 'Brainstorming' on new ideas – Students manifested enthusiasm and skill in playing' or 'toying' with new ideas learned in geography; 5) Problem-solving – Students manifested their ability to identify, think aloud and be reflective of their own personal problems in learning the course; 6) Determining cause and effect relationship – Ability to discern causes and effects of their actions is evident in their entries; 7) Evaluating options – Students evaluated their options in the course, like joining a club, taking risks, and beating the challenges; 8) Planning and setting goals – Through their entries, the students manifested some skills in planning and setting some of the immediate and long term goals in the course; 9) Monitoring progress – Students monitored their progress in the course in general; 10) Making decisions – There seemed to be a marked improvement in their self-esteem in facing the challenges of the course as evidenced in the students' decision-making ability; and 11) Reflecting on one's own progress.

The thinking log on students' journals is a rich source of reflection on how students look at themselves, think aloud and develop thinking skills.

Journal writing is a time-tested method of teaching and evaluating students' progress in a course. Thinking log somehow builds communication between the learners and the teachers, especially if students raise questions for clarifications in the journal.