

DOES POETRY ENHANCE CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AMONG UNDERGRADUATES?

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Abstract

Many employers have lamented that the majority of university graduates are not prepared in the key areas of employment such as critical thinking, oral and written communication, self-direction and then applying such knowledge and skills in real world settings. In fact, critical thinking skills are deemed as integral parts of transformational pedagogy which aims at promoting a more informed society. Furthermore, literature teaching has been advocated for enhancing students' critical thinking and reasoning. Therefore, this study sought to explore the effects of incorporating critical thinking strategies into the teaching of literature and specifically poetry, with the aim of enhancing students' critical thinking skills. Using the experimental approach involving a pre-test and post-test, the California Critical Thinking Skills Tests (CCTST) was administered to 48 first-year students enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts programme. Students were assigned randomly into the control group and experimental group. During the semester, the experimental group was given intervention comprising guided in-class discussions with Socratic questioning skills, elicitation of students' reflections, and finally students were asked to write and present a poem based on a theme. Although the analysis of CCTST using paired T-tests indicated no significant differences between the two groups, the mean from the T-tests showed an increase in the scores of the experimental group. The findings present significant implications on the course design in that critical thinking skills should be embedded across all disciplines of study. In addition, pedagogical practice in using literature should be implemented to enhance students' critical thinking skills.

Keywords: Teaching of Literature, Poetry, Critical Thinking Skills, California Critical Thinking Skills Tests (CCTST).
