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## Analysis of the Teacher's Role in Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking Skills: Social Studies Learning at Elementary School

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### ABSTRACT

Critical thinking skills are essential competencies in Social Studies (IPS) learning, yet their development depends heavily on the teacher's classroom efficacy. At Elementary School 2 Ambon, a comprehensive understanding is required regarding how teachers integrate their pedagogical responsibilities to stimulate students' critical thinking. This study aims to investigate and describe the teacher's role in improving students' critical thinking skills through IPS learning at Elementary School 2 Ambon. Utilizing a qualitative approach with descriptive methods, the research subjects included the principal, IPS teachers, and 20 students. Data were collected via observation, interviews, and documentation techniques, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model (data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion drawing). The findings reveal that teachers effectively perform seven main functions to foster critical thinking: (1) Educator, providing quality instructions; (2) Demonstrator, utilizing learning media; (3) Class Manager, maintaining a conducive atmosphere; (4) Facilitator, supplying learning resources; (5) Supervisor, directing student activities; (6) Motivator, providing encouragement; and (7) Evaluator, conducting test and non-test assessments. Practically, this research guides educators on diversifying instructional roles to optimize students' cognitive abilities. Theoretically, these results enrich the literature on pedagogical strategies in elementary social studies to cultivate a critical and analytical generation.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Education is essentially a conscious and planned effort to optimally develop all human potential. According to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, education is designed to create a learning environment and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to possess spiritual and religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed by themselves, society, the nation, and the state.

Accordingly, education serves as the primary means of advancing all aspects of Indonesian life, encompassing the economic, social, technological, moral, and cultural dimensions (Dodi, 2019; Pada et al., 2024; Sain et al., 2024). The transformation brought about by education ideally touches both the individual and collective realms, both materially and spiritually. Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of education must be carried out continuously and evenly, from elementary school to university.

Within the learning governance ecosystem, teachers hold a central and strategic position in producing high-quality human resources in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Permatasari & Tandiayuk, 2023). This crucial role is rooted in teachers' professional responsibility to educate the nation by actualizing the diverse unique potential possessed by each student (Sanjani, 2020). To face the dynamics of the times, teachers are required not only to possess a strong mastery of material, but also to possess skills, abilities, and an openness to educational reform as disseminators of innovative ideas (Ilyas, 2022). Furthermore, teachers are key figures who guide students in internalizing moral values and knowledge for their future success (Sulistiani & Nugraheni, 2023). This context of professionalism is emphasized by Article 10 Paragraph (1) of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which mandates mastery of four core competencies: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional, which holistically ensure the quality of educational services relevant to the challenges of the times.

Because of these professional demands, teachers in the modern era are obliged to continuously generate pedagogical innovations to optimize the learning process (Pandey et al., 2023). Teachers' ability to develop innovative media and learning strategies has been proven to be a powerful stimulus in increasing student motivation and active engagement (Azzahra & Sya, 2023). The innovations presented by teachers create a pleasant learning atmosphere, which in turn makes it easier for students to understand the material in depth (Nisa et al., 2024). However, the reality on the ground shows that resistance to innovation persists, with teacher-centered teaching patterns still frequently encountered. This condition triggers psychological burnout in students who are trapped in a passive role without meaningful reciprocal interaction. This phenomenon is particularly prone to occur in social studies (IPS) subjects, which are often reduced to mere memorization activities, even though IPS plays a fundamental role in constructing students' critical thinking and sensitivity to the socio-cultural realities around them.

Critical thinking skills have shifted from merely academic achievement to become one of the most essential competencies students must possess to survive in the modern era (Anggraeni et al., 2023; Arriah & Ilhamuddin, 2026; Azhari et al., 2025). Integrating critical thinking skills into all aspects of learning is crucial because these skills equip individuals to solve, confront, and analyze the complexity of real-life problems (Irwan & Aslan, 2024; Wiguna et al., 2023). The social studies curriculum specifically carries a significant mission to stimulate this sharpness of reasoning, given that the learning material directly relates to students' daily problems (Sasmita et al., 2022). Through mastery of critical thinking skills, students will no longer be passive

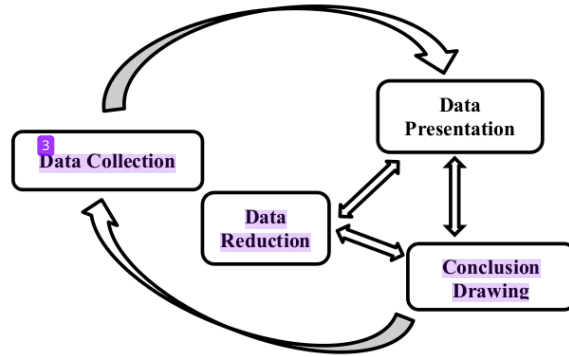
recipients of information but will instead be able to make decisions and resolve social problems with logical, rational, and objective considerations (Kayaalp et al., 2020; Magdalena et al., 2020). Therefore, teachers bear a significant responsibility as facilitators, identifying student needs, designing varied instructional methods, and shaping students' character holistically to foster critical thinking skills.

Although the urgency of critical thinking is well understood theoretically, its implementation in the field often faces unique sociogeographical and pedagogical challenges, as illustrated at Elementary School 2 Ambon. Based on initial observations, teachers at the school have made progressive efforts to maximize their role in igniting students' critical thinking through active methods such as discussions, debates, and project-based learning, accompanied using challenging prompting questions. The novelty of this research lies in the contradictory analysis found in the field: on the one hand, the intervention strategies successfully triggered a significant increase in argumentation skills, problem-solving skills, and evaluative engagement for some students. However, on the other hand, resistance persists in the form of learning barriers for some students who experience chronic difficulties in drawing conclusions, formulating questions, and solving simple problems in social studies. This in-depth exploration of how modern instructional strategies interact with students' learning barriers in Eastern Indonesia is what differentiates this study from previous, more generalistic research.

Based on the gap between the potential success of teachers' strategies and the persistence of critical thinking difficulties in students, a more comprehensive scientific investigation is needed at Elementary School 2 Ambon. This study aims not only to document the formal role of teachers and their supporting factors but also focuses on dissecting the mechanisms of teacher pedagogical adaptation in creating an interactive, participatory, and inclusive social studies classroom ecosystem for all levels of student ability. A deeper understanding of these dynamics is expected to generate tactical recommendations regarding mentoring models based on local wisdom and classroom innovation. Based on this multidimensional background, this study specifically aims to investigate and describe in depth the role of teachers in improving students' critical thinking skills through social studies learning at Elementary School 2 Ambon.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The qualitative approach was selected with the aim of obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the teacher's role in enhancing students' critical thinking skills through Social Studies learning. The descriptive method was adopted to present a systematic and factual account of the critical thinking skills observed among students at Elementary School 2 Ambon.



**Figure 1.** Qualitative Design with a Descriptive Approach

The study was conducted at Elementary School 2 Ambon, Sirimau District, Ambon City, Maluku Province, with a focus on the enhancement of students' critical thinking skills through Social Studies learning. The research informants consisted of the school principal, the Social Studies teacher, and students at Elementary School 2 Ambon.

The data collection techniques employed in this study were as follows: (1) Observation: direct observation of the teacher's instructional practices and teacher student interactions, including the use of learning strategies, student participation, and critical thinking activities; (2) Interviews: in-depth interview technique to ascertain the strategies employed by the teacher in enhancing students' critical thinking skills through Social Studies learning; and (3) Documentation: collection of archival materials related to instructional tools and students' Social Studies learning outcomes at Elementary School 2 Ambon.

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously, from the initial stage of data collection through to the conclusion. The data analysis model adopted was the Miles and Huberman model, encompassing three analytical pathways: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. To validate the data and ensure the credibility of the information, the study employed source triangulation and technique triangulation. Through this qualitative approach, it is anticipated that a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the teacher's role in enhancing students' critical thinking skills through Social Studies learning at Elementary School 2 Ambon can be achieved.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Results

This study presents in-depth findings regarding the teacher's role in enhancing students' critical thinking skills through Social Studies learning at Elementary School

2 Ambon. These findings are organized around five key teacher roles in fostering students' critical thinking skills: the teacher as demonstrator, the teacher as classroom manager, the teacher as facilitator, the teacher as motivator, and the teacher as evaluator.

### The Teacher's Role as Demonstrator in Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking Skills

In the role of demonstrator, a teacher must have a thorough command of the subject matter and select instructional methods that are appropriate for the material. Moreover, the teacher must continuously develop and enhance his/her professional capabilities.

*Researcher: "Based on my observations in class, you seem very flexible in your teaching. How do you view your role as an educator in fostering students' critical thinking skills during social studies lessons?"*

*Teacher: "I believe that teachers are role models. Before asking students to think critically, I must first demonstrate that attitude. In the process, I don't want to be rigidly tied to the lesson plan (RPP). If the situation in class develops and an interesting discussion emerges, I will adjust the material delivery to remain relevant to the students' current dynamics."*

*Researcher: "Very interesting. Besides mastery of the material, what other elements do you think are crucial in supporting this process?"*

*Teacher: "Mastery of the content is fundamental, but not sufficient. I integrate visual media such as instructional videos to make the material more lively. Furthermore, selecting the right method is crucial. I strive to create an interactive atmosphere where students don't just listen, but actively participate."*

*Researcher: "How do you ensure that students who may be struggling can still follow this critical thinking process?"*

*Teacher: "The key is patience in guiding students. I try to provide examples that are close to their daily lives to make abstract material easier to understand. By providing accessible examples, they feel more confident asking questions and analyzing the phenomena we discuss in class."*

*Researcher: "So, the point is to create space for them to be actively involved?"*

*Teacher: "Exactly. Teachers must be facilitators who open the door to opportunities for students to express their opinions. When they feel involved, their critical thinking skills automatically begin to develop."*

The teacher serves as a role model and must select suitable instructional methods to foster students' critical thinking abilities. Observational data indicates that the teacher plays a significant role as a model for students. The teacher's role as an educator is central to the learning process, as he/she adapts the delivery of content to the situational dynamics of the classroom rather than adhering rigidly to the lesson plan.

Beyond mastery of content, the effective use of lesson plans, the integration of video materials, and the utilization of instructional media and methods appropriate to the subject matter are equally important in cultivating students' critical thinking skills. The teacher also assists students in comprehending the material patiently by providing accessible examples, making lessons more engaging and interactive, and creating opportunities for active student participation and the development of critical thinking skills.

**The Teacher's as Classroom Manager in Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking Skills**

As a teacher, the primary responsibility is to manage the classroom to create a comfortable and conducive learning atmosphere. Observations revealed that the teacher conducts activities in accordance with the schedule, actively encourages student participation, and frequently poses questions to sustain student engagement.

Researcher: "In my observations, the classroom atmosphere seemed very lively yet controlled. How important is classroom management to you in supporting students' critical thinking skills?"

Teacher: "Very essential. I believe that a comfortable learning environment is a key foundation. If students feel comfortable and the classroom atmosphere is conducive, they will be more confident in exploring ideas. Without good management, discussions can become unfocused, and this can actually hinder the development of their thinking."

Researcher: "How do you encourage students to actively participate in discussions or interact with one another?"

Teacher: "I always encourage them with open Q&A sessions. I encourage them not to be afraid to ask questions or express their opinions. In addition, I facilitate interaction between students; they must learn to listen and respond to each other's arguments. My role here is to monitor and ensure everyone remains engaged in the learning process."

Researcher: "I notice you often provide feedback after students answer. Is that part of your strategy?"

Teacher: "That's right. Feedback mechanisms are crucial for students to know how well they understand. By providing constructive feedback, students feel valued for their participation. This boosts their confidence to continue engaging in future class activities."

Researcher: "So you're not just focusing on the material, but also on how the dynamics of the interactions unfold, right?"

Teacher: "Of course. My job is to maintain a balance between classroom control and students' freedom of expression. If I can maintain good control of the environment, student participation will naturally increase, and that's where their critical thinking skills begin to be tested."

Interviews and observations further revealed that teachers need to maintain control of the classroom environment and ensure student involvement. Teachers encourage students to ask questions, engage in discussion, and interact with one another, while simultaneously monitoring and facilitating the learning process. Question-and-answer activities and feedback mechanisms are employed to enhance student participation. Effective classroom management is essential because a comfortable learning environment directly influences the learning process and students' critical thinking development.

**The Teacher's Role as Facilitator in Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking Skills**

Based on observational data, it was found that when acting as a facilitator in the learning process, the teacher consistently employs a variety of instructional media in relation to specific learning content.

Researcher: "In the previous interview data, it was mentioned that you act as a facilitator. Can you explain how you specifically facilitate learning for students to become more critical?"

Teacher: "As a facilitator, my main task is to remove barriers to learning. I use engaging instructional methods to simplify difficult material. I want them to feel that learning social studies is not boring, so their minds are more open to analyzing problems."

Researcher: "I also noticed that you often relate the material to students' personal experiences. What is your goal?"

Teacher: "Yes, that's my strategy for creating a conducive classroom atmosphere. By connecting the lesson to what they have experienced or learned previously (prior experience), students feel the material is relevant to them. This makes the lesson much more interesting and encourages them to express their own opinions."

Researcher: "Besides providing technical support, how do you maintain their enthusiasm and maintain consistency in learning?"

Teacher: "That's where motivation comes in. I always try to inject enthusiasm and provide positive reinforcement in every session. Critical thinking requires a lot of mental effort, so if students aren't motivated or lose their enthusiasm, they tend to become passive. I want them to stay enthusiastic because curiosity is the main fuel for critical thinking."

Researcher: "So, a comfortable atmosphere and the relevance of the material are key, right?"

Teacher: "Of course. When the lesson feels interesting and relevant, motivation will naturally emerge. That's when my role as a facilitator is successful—when they find it easy to start thinking, asking questions, and delving deeper into the material."

<sup>10</sup> Interview data further indicate that the teacher's facilitative role in developing students' critical thinking abilities is enacted by providing learning ease to students through engaging instructional methods, creating a conducive classroom atmosphere by connecting the subject matter to students' prior experiences, making lessons more interesting, and motivating students to maintain their enthusiasm for learning.

#### <sup>45</sup> **The Teacher's Role as Motivator in Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking Skills** <sup>47</sup>

The Social Studies teacher's role as motivator <sup>19</sup> in enhancing students' critical thinking skills is enacted by providing stimulation and encouragement to students in the form of assignments and rewards. Strengthening student learning motivation is an indispensable component of effective instructional practice. In addition to transmitting knowledge, teachers are also responsible for motivating students in their learning endeavors. It cannot be denied that individual differences in learning motivation are considerable; therefore, it is essential for teachers to consistently provide motivation to students so that they maintain their enthusiasm and achieve academic success while also cultivating critical thinking dispositions.

Researcher: "In my observations, you seem very active in motivating students. How significant does teacher motivation play in developing their intellectual capacity and critical thinking skills?"

Teacher: "For me, motivation is the key to unlocking students' potential. Without enthusiasm, their intellectual capacity will not be maximized. Therefore, I always try to be active and creative in teaching, including ensuring the necessary facilities are available. If they feel supported, they will be more willing to explore their thoughts."

Researcher: "What concrete actions do you take in class to encourage them to think critically?"

Teacher: "I constantly encourage them to ask questions and engage in group discussions. I don't want them to be passive listeners. After they work in groups, I have them present their results to the class. This trains them to defend their arguments critically."

Researcher: "I also notice you often give applause or verbal praise when students answer successfully. Why are small things like that considered important?"

Teacher: "That's a form of positive reinforcement. At elementary school age, appreciation like applause or praise means a lot to them. It builds their self-confidence. When students feel appreciated, they won't be afraid of making mistakes in the future, and that sense of security makes them freer to think critically and ask deeper questions."

Researcher: "So, that appreciation stimulates their courage to express their opinions?"

Teacher: "That's right. Praise and an appreciative atmosphere create an environment where critical thinking can thrive. Strong motivation makes students feel that their efforts to think hard are worthwhile."

Teacher motivation plays a pivotal role in enhancing students' critical thinking skills. Strong motivation can stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning and their intellectual capacity. The teacher emphasizes the motivator role in Social Studies instruction by providing necessary facilities and being active and creative in teaching. The teacher encourages students to pose questions, engage in discussion, and present their group work outcomes. Observational data indicate that the teacher motivates students through positive reinforcement such as applause and verbal praise.

#### The Teacher's Role as Evaluator in Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking Skills

As an evaluator, the teacher is expected to ascertain whether the formulated learning objectives have been achieved and whether the instructional material has been presented appropriately. Educational assessment is of critical importance for both teachers and students, encompassing the evaluation of knowledge, skills, and attitudinal dimensions. The teacher conducts daily assessments, semester examinations, and non-test evaluations. Observational data indicate that the teacher routinely administers impromptu quizzes to encourage independent thinking and to help students connect previously learned material to new content.

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Interview data confirm that evaluation activities, including quizzes, stimulate higher-order thinking and serve to measure students' achievements and critical thinking skills. The teacher employs a variety of quiz formats to comprehensively assess students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The triangulation of data gathered through observations, interviews, documentation, and questionnaires, the pivotal role of the teacher in enhancing students' critical thinking skills within Social Studies learning was firmly established. Collaboratively verified through extensive observations with both the school principal and the Social Studies teacher, five core indicators of students' critical thinking skills successfully emerged during instructional activities, which include the students' demonstrated proficiency in drawing logical conclusions, identifying underlying assumptions, executing deductive reasoning, performing effective interpretation and communication, and critically evaluating the strength or weakness of arguments.

Considering these findings, an examination of the critical thinking skills of Grade IV students in Social Studies learning based on the researcher's observations across the five critical thinking indicators reveals that while the majority of indicators have been substantially met, a subset of students still encounters difficulty with the second indicator, namely the identification of assumptions. This is manifested in a lack of communicativeness: not all students are willing to directly articulate their opinions, as

they remain reluctant to express their views due to uncertainty regarding their correctness.

### Discussion

The findings of the field investigation demonstrate the teacher's role in enhancing students' critical thinking skills through Social Studies learning conducted at Elementary School 2 Ambon. Critical thinking is widely recognized as essential competency to be developed in every student. Critical thinking constitutes a process of deep and rational thought grounded in sound sources, references, experiences, and adequate knowledge. Therefore, critical thinking skills do not merely entail ordinary thinking but encompass the ability to reason rationally and to articulate opinions based on clear sources, knowledge, and experience.

#### The Teacher's Role as Demonstrator in Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking

In fulfilling the demonstrator role, teachers must have a thorough mastery of the learning material and must also be capable of selecting instructional methods that stimulate students' motivation during the learning process. According to Risandy et al., (2024) teachers must master the subject matter and select appropriate teaching methods so that students can comprehend the material effectively; during question-and-answer sessions, teachers must be able to respond accurately to students' questions in order to support the effectiveness of the instructional process.

Students who inherently possess positive dispositions are generally easier to develop. The teacher's role as an instructor can assist students in actively participating in class and in developing their critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills warrant development in students, given that they constitute one of the essential competencies required in the twenty-first century. Critical thinking skills refer to the ability to analyze facts, articulate and defend opinions, make comparisons, draw conclusions, evaluate arguments, and solve problems.

#### The Teacher's Role as Classroom Manager in Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking

As a classroom manager, the teacher bears the responsibility of ensuring a conducive and comfortable learning environment throughout the instructional process. This is of paramount importance, as a comfortable learning environment enables students to absorb instructional material more effectively. Effective classroom management, including the organization of question-and-answer sessions, can encourage students to be more active in seeking clarification on material they do not yet understand.

With sound classroom management, students can more readily initiate group discussions in which they exchange opinions and challenge one another's ideas (Nurlinawati & Ningsih, 2025). The findings of Iskandar et al., (2024) indicate that one approach to enhancing critical thinking abilities is to create a learning atmosphere that is enjoyable and challenging while utilizing creative and innovative media.

This is intended to strengthen students' thinking abilities. The classroom environment must be organized and supervised so that learning activities remain focused on the intended objectives. The general aim of classroom management is to provide and utilize classroom facilities for various teaching and learning activities to achieve optimal outcomes. Its specific objective is to develop students' capacity to use learning tools and to create conditions that foster active student engagement through questioning, thereby enhancing their critical thinking abilities.

### **The Teacher's Role as Facilitator in Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking Skills**

Based on the findings obtained, it is known that the teacher's facilitative role is enacted by providing learning ease to students, creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere so that students can readily comprehend the content presented by the teacher. The Social Studies teacher also serves as a discussion facilitator, transmitting messages to students effectively so that students can easily receive what the teacher intends to convey. It was found that during instruction, the teacher actively listens to students' suggestions and questions. During classroom discussions, the teacher facilitates the flow of the discussion without dominating it. The teacher endeavors to encourage students to actively ask questions, provide answers, and offer arguments, while patiently listening to their contributions. Although the teacher is the primary agent in the learning process, in the facilitator role the teacher consistently strives to create opportunities for students to be actively engaged.

The teaching and learning process is made engaging and enjoyable in the classroom; during the instructional process, the teacher as facilitator promotes the learning process, particularly using engaging instructional media. According to Hidayati and Fauziyah, (2023) the teacher's role as facilitator is the conscious effort of a teacher who provides alternatives toward the achievement of the educational process and facilitates students in nurturing their talents and interests so that the prescribed learning activities can proceed optimally. The teacher as facilitator guides students throughout the problem-solving process (Siregar et al., 2025).

### **The Teacher's Role as Motivator in Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking Skills**

The teacher provides encouragement and stimulation to students so that they are enthusiastic and actively participate in the learning process. During Social Studies lessons, the teacher assigns group tasks, and groups that achieve higher scores are rewarded so that students feel a sense of pride and appreciation, while also having the opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills.

The teacher also provides praise to students who have assisted classmates experiencing difficulties. The provision of such praise constitutes a form of positive reinforcement that can serve as effective motivation for students. When students successfully complete a task, they warrant acknowledgment through praise. Timely praise cultivates an enjoyable classroom atmosphere, strengthens students' learning motivation, and builds their sense of self-worth.

In stimulating students' critical thinking skills, teachers must offer praise for all forms of opinion expressed by students during learning activities in relation to the material being taught. This is intended to keep students motivated and resilient when their ideas require correction by the teacher (Najoan et al., 2023). With positive encouragement from the teacher, students will become increasingly enthusiastic in the learning process and will enhance their critical thinking skills by seeking information on material they do not yet understand (Guci & Kirana, 2025).

### The Teacher's Role as Evaluator in Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking Skills

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that in conducting evaluation, the teacher consistently administers quiz questions as an assessment instrument for students. Through assessment, teachers can determine the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved, the degree of students' mastery of the subject matter, and the appropriateness and effectiveness of the instructional methods employed.

The teacher confirms that evaluation activities, including quizzes, stimulate higher-order thinking and serve to measure students' achievements and critical thinking abilities. The teacher employs a variety of quiz formats to comprehensively assess students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

In this regard, reference is made to the framework of Ennis (2018) concerning the five indicators of students' critical thinking skills, particularly for Grade IV students at Elementary School 2 Ambon, as follows: (1) students demonstrate ease in drawing conclusions from learning content; (2) students demonstrate ease in drawing conclusions from the general to the specific; (3) students demonstrate ease in performing interpretation and communication effectively; (4) students demonstrate ease in evaluating arguments, whether weak or strong; and (5) students demonstrate ease in identifying assumptions.

In examining these findings, it is apparent that the critical thinking indicator that is least consistently exhibited relates to the identification of assumptions, as some students still encounter difficulty being communicative not all students are willing to directly articulate their opinions. That is, they have not yet fully developed the ability to explain the meaning of examples given by the teacher using their own words, nor are all Grade IV students capable of expressing their opinions directly due to shyness. Plummer et al. (2022) regarding the habitual dispositions that emerge when a person engages in critical thinking, the following characteristics were observed: (1) displaying intellectual curiosity toward a given problem; (2) demonstrating open-mindedness; and (3) showing the capacity to understand the perspectives of others.

Accordingly, there is a clear need for the teacher's role in enhancing students' critical thinking skills through Social Studies learning. Examining the five critical thinking indicators proposed by Ennis, which serve as the grand theory underpinning this study it is evident that while nearly all indicators have been substantially met in Grade IV, some students continue to struggle with the second indicator, namely the identification of assumptions. It is therefore incumbent upon teachers to strengthen the critical thinking abilities of Grade IV students, as teachers are the primary actors who

are most familiar with their students' conditions and learning characteristics during Social Studies instruction. Consistent with research findings, teachers are the frontline agents in the implementation of education and are those who engage directly with students during the learning process.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The development of students' critical thinking skills in Social Studies (IPS) learning at Elementary School 2 Ambon is highly determined by the teacher's capacity to optimize and integrate their pedagogical responsibilities. The study demonstrates that the teacher effectively fosters these essential cognitive skills by successfully executing seven core professional functions: acting as an Educator who delivers quality instruction, a Demonstrator who utilizes instructional media, a Class Manager who maintains a conducive learning environment, a Facilitator who provides learning resources, a Supervisor who directs student activities, a Motivator who offers encouragement, and an Evaluator who conducts comprehensive assessments. Ultimately, the diversification of these seven roles not only provides a practical framework for educators to enhance elementary students' analytical reasoning but also contributes theoretically to the literature on innovative pedagogical strategies aimed at cultivating a critical generation.

Based on these findings, it is highly recommended that elementary school teachers, particularly in Social Studies (IPS) instruction, continuously diversify and integrate their seven core pedagogical roles by shifting away from conventional rote-memorization methods toward innovative, student-centered strategies such as project-based learning and interactive media utilization. Furthermore, school principals and educational stakeholders should provide structured professional development programs and collaborative workshops focused on critical-thinking assessment, ensuring that teachers are continually equipped to mitigate learning barriers and cultivate an analytical, reflective generation of students.

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