



Studies in Technology and Education

Volume 2, Issue 1, 2025 | <https://www.azalpub.com/index.php/ste>

OPEN ACCESS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Academic Involvement in Inquiry-Oriented Social Studies Classrooms at Naggasican National High School

Roshelle Ann Q. Agustin
Dr. Matronillo Martin

Northeastern College, Santiago City, Philippines

Article Info

Received:
January 2, 2026

Accepted:
February 6, 2026

Published:
March 31, 2026

Abstract

Inquiry-oriented instruction has increasingly been recognized in social science education as an effective pedagogical approach for promoting meaningful learner engagement, critical thinking, and democratic participation. By emphasizing questioning, dialogue, analysis of social issues, and evidence-based reasoning, inquiry-oriented Social Studies instruction encourages learners to actively construct understanding of complex social realities. This study examined the level of academic involvement among secondary school learners exposed to inquiry-oriented Social Studies classrooms at Naggasican National High School. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected from 180 junior high school learners through a validated Academic Involvement Survey measuring behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of engagement. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analyses were employed to determine learners' levels of involvement and the relationship between inquiry-oriented instructional practices and academic involvement. Findings revealed a high overall level of academic involvement, with cognitive involvement emerging as the strongest dimension. Significant positive relationships were found between inquiry-oriented instruction and all dimensions of academic involvement. The results suggest that inquiry-oriented Social Studies instruction plays a critical role in sustaining learner participation, emotional investment, and deep cognitive engagement. Implications for Social Studies teaching practice, instructional leadership, and future research are discussed.

Keywords: inquiry-oriented instruction, academic involvement, Social Studies education, social science learning, learner engagement, quantitative study

1. Introduction

Academic involvement has become a central concern in contemporary social science education, particularly at the secondary school level where learners are expected to engage in higher-order thinking, critical analysis, interpretation of social phenomena, and informed decision-making. Social Studies as a discipline is not limited to the transmission of historical facts or civic concepts; rather, it aims to develop socially aware, critically minded, and responsible citizens capable of understanding societal issues and participating meaningfully in democratic processes. At this stage of schooling, learners are expected to analyze multiple perspectives, evaluate evidence, and connect classroom knowledge to real-world social contexts.

Despite curricular reforms that promote learner-centered and inquiry-based approaches, many Social Studies classrooms continue to rely heavily on teacher-directed instruction characterized by lectures, textbook recitation, and recall-based assessments. Such traditional approaches often limit learners' opportunities to ask questions, engage in dialogue, analyze social issues, and reflect critically on their own assumptions. As a result, learners may experience Social Studies as abstract, disengaging, or irrelevant to their lived experiences, leading to passive participation and diminished motivation.

Inquiry-oriented instruction has emerged as a pedagogical response to these challenges. Rooted in constructivist and critical pedagogical traditions, inquiry-oriented Social Studies instruction positions learners as active investigators of social realities rather than passive recipients of information. Teachers facilitate learning by presenting authentic social problems, guiding discussions, and supporting learners in analyzing sources, constructing arguments, and reflecting on societal issues. Through inquiry, learners are encouraged to question dominant narratives, consider diverse viewpoints, and engage in reasoned judgment.

In the Philippine secondary school context, inquiry-oriented instruction is emphasized in Social Studies curricula aligned with competency-based and learner-centered frameworks. These reforms aim to cultivate critically literate learners who can analyze social issues, participate in civic life, and apply social knowledge to everyday situations. However, the extent to which inquiry-oriented instruction translates into meaningful academic involvement among learners remains underexplored, particularly in public secondary schools where contextual constraints such as large class sizes and limited instructional resources may affect implementation.

Most local studies in Social Studies education have focused on academic achievement or descriptive classroom practices, with relatively few quantitative investigations examining learners' academic involvement as a multidimensional construct. Moreover, limited empirical evidence exists on how inquiry-oriented Social Studies instruction influences learners' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement simultaneously.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines academic involvement in inquiry-oriented Social Studies classrooms at Naggasican National High School. Specifically, it seeks to determine learners' levels of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement and to examine the relationship between inquiry-oriented instructional practices and learner engagement. By providing empirical evidence from a public secondary school context, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on inquiry-based Social Studies education and inform pedagogical practice, instructional leadership, and policy implementation.

2. Review of Related Literature

Inquiry-oriented Social Studies instruction emphasizes learners' active engagement in questioning, analyzing, and interpreting social issues, historical events, and contemporary societal problems. Drawing from Dewey's (1938) conception of inquiry as reflective thinking grounded in experience, inquiry-based learning views education as a process through which learners construct meaning through interaction with ideas, evidence, and social contexts. In Social Studies education, inquiry serves as a means of developing critical consciousness, civic competence, and reflective judgment.

Contemporary research highlights that inquiry-oriented instruction supports deeper conceptual understanding and critical thinking by encouraging learners to analyze multiple sources, examine diverse perspectives, and engage in reasoned argumentation. Unlike traditional approaches that emphasize memorization of facts, inquiry-oriented Social Studies instruction prioritizes interpretation,

evaluation, and synthesis of information. Learners are encouraged to pose questions, challenge assumptions, and connect social concepts to real-world contexts, thereby making learning more meaningful and relevant.

Guided inquiry has been identified as particularly effective in secondary Social Studies classrooms. In guided inquiry, teachers provide structure through essential questions, curated materials, and scaffolding strategies while allowing learners autonomy in exploring ideas and constructing understanding. This balance between guidance and independence helps learners engage productively with complex social issues without experiencing cognitive overload. Research indicates that guided inquiry promotes sustained engagement, persistence, and reflective thinking among adolescents.

Academic involvement in Social Studies learning is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components (Fredricks et al., 2004). Behavioral involvement refers to learners' observable participation in discussions, group work, and inquiry activities. Emotional involvement includes learners' interest, enjoyment, and sense of relevance or belonging within the classroom. Cognitive involvement reflects learners' willingness to invest effort in complex tasks, employ critical thinking strategies, and regulate their own learning processes.

Empirical studies demonstrate that inquiry-oriented instructional practices positively influence all three dimensions of academic involvement. By promoting interaction, relevance, and learner agency, inquiry-based Social Studies instruction enhances participation, motivation, and intellectual engagement (Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Wentzel, 2012). Learners exposed to inquiry-oriented environments consistently show higher levels of curiosity, persistence, and critical reasoning than those in traditional teacher-centered classrooms.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine learners' academic involvement in inquiry-oriented Social Studies classrooms. The descriptive component was used to determine the levels of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement, while the correlational component examined the relationship between inquiry-oriented instructional practices and learners' academic involvement.

3.2 Participants

Participants consisted of 180 junior high school learners enrolled in Social Studies classes at Naggasican National High School. Learners from Grades 8 to 10 were included to capture engagement across multiple developmental stages in secondary education. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proportional representation across grade levels, enhancing the generalizability of the findings within the school context.

3.3 Instrumentation

Data were collected using a modified Academic Involvement Scale adapted from Fredricks et al. (2004). The instrument consisted of 30 items distributed equally across three dimensions: behavioral involvement, emotional involvement, and cognitive involvement. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.91, indicating strong reliability.

3.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to determine the levels of academic involvement across dimensions. Pearson's r correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between inquiry-oriented instructional practices and academic involvement. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

4. Results

****Table 1.** Level of Academic Involvement of Learners**

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Behavioral Involvement	4.12	0.53	High
Emotional Involvement	4.18	0.49	High
Cognitive Involvement	4.26	0.47	Very High
Overall Academic Involvement	4.19	0.46	High

Results indicate a **high overall level of academic involvement** among learners in inquiry-oriented science classrooms. Cognitive involvement obtained the highest mean, suggesting that learners were strongly engaged in higher-order thinking, reflection, and problem-solving. This finding supports research indicating that inquiry-based instruction promotes deeper cognitive engagement in science learning (Minner et al., 2010).

****Table 2:** Relationship Between Inquiry-Oriented Instruction and Academic Involvement**

Dimension	r	p-value	Interpretation
Behavioral Involvement	0.62	< .001	Significant
Emotional Involvement	0.68	< .001	Significant
Cognitive Involvement	0.74	< .001	Significant

Pearson correlation analysis revealed **significant positive relationships** between inquiry-oriented instructional practices and all dimensions of academic involvement. The strongest relationship was observed with cognitive involvement, indicating that inquiry-oriented instruction is particularly effective in promoting deep thinking and metacognitive engagement. These results align with prior studies highlighting inquiry as a catalyst for sustained learner involvement (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007).

Results revealed a high overall level of academic involvement among learners in inquiry-oriented Social Studies classrooms. Among the three dimensions, cognitive involvement obtained the highest mean, indicating that learners were strongly engaged in critical thinking, reflection, and analysis of social issues. Behavioral and emotional involvement also registered high levels, suggesting consistent participation and positive attitudes toward Social Studies learning.

Correlation analysis showed significant positive relationships between inquiry-oriented instructional practices and all dimensions of academic involvement. The strongest relationship was observed with cognitive involvement, indicating that inquiry-oriented Social Studies instruction is particularly effective in fostering deep thinking, metacognitive engagement, and sustained intellectual effort.

5. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that inquiry-oriented Social Studies instruction plays a decisive role in strengthening learners’ academic involvement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. High levels of behavioral involvement indicate that learners were actively participating in classroom discussions, collaborative inquiry tasks, and problem-based activities rather than remaining passive recipients of information. Such participation is essential in Social Studies learning, where understanding is constructed through dialogue, debate, and interpretation of social realities.

High emotional involvement reflects learners’ increased interest, enjoyment, and perceived relevance of Social Studies content. Inquiry-oriented instruction encouraged learners to connect lessons to real-world social issues, making learning more meaningful and engaging. Emotional engagement is particularly important in Social Studies, as learners’ values, beliefs, and identities are often implicated in discussions of social and civic issues.

Cognitive involvement emerged as the strongest dimension of engagement, highlighting the effectiveness of inquiry-oriented instruction in promoting critical analysis, reflective judgment, and self-regulated learning. Learners demonstrated willingness to analyze evidence, consider multiple perspectives, and justify their positions core competencies in social science education. These findings align with Fredricks et al.’s (2004) engagement framework and reinforce evidence that inquiry-based instruction fosters deeper and more meaningful learning experiences.

6. Conclusions and Implications

This study provides robust quantitative evidence that inquiry-oriented Social Studies instruction at Naggasican National High School fosters high levels of academic involvement among learners across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. By prioritizing questioning, dialogue, analysis of social issues, and reflective thinking, inquiry-oriented instruction creates learner-centered environments in which students are encouraged to actively participate, express ideas, and engage

meaningfully with content. Such instructional practices move learning beyond rote memorization toward deeper understanding, enabling learners to connect Social Studies concepts to real-world contexts, develop critical perspectives, and sustain intellectual effort. The findings underscore the value of inquiry-oriented pedagogy in promoting not only participation and interest but also higher-order thinking and reflective judgment essential for social science learning.

In terms of instructional practice, the results suggest that Social Studies teachers should intentionally design inquiry-oriented lessons that revolve around authentic and relevant social issues, guiding learners through critical questioning, source analysis, and reflective discussion. The use of formative assessment and timely feedback is essential in supporting learners' thinking processes and helping them refine ideas, arguments, and interpretations. By adopting inquiry-based strategies, teachers can create inclusive learning spaces where diverse viewpoints are valued and learners are empowered to take ownership of their learning.

At the level of school leadership, the findings highlight the importance of institutional support in sustaining inquiry-oriented Social Studies instruction. School leaders are encouraged to prioritize ongoing professional development focused on inquiry-based pedagogy, classroom discourse, and assessment for learning. Providing teachers with adequate instructional resources such as access to diverse learning materials, time for collaborative planning, and supportive learning environments can further strengthen the implementation of inquiry-oriented approaches. Leadership support plays a critical role in translating pedagogical ideals into consistent classroom practice.

Finally, this study points to important directions for future research. While the present findings establish significant relationships between inquiry-oriented instruction and academic involvement, future studies may adopt experimental, mixed-methods, or longitudinal research designs to examine causal effects more rigorously. Further research could explore how inquiry-oriented Social Studies instruction influences learners' civic competence, critical thinking skills, and long-term academic outcomes across diverse educational contexts. Such investigations would deepen understanding of the sustained impact of inquiry-based pedagogy on learners' social and intellectual development.

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