

# Democratic Dialogue: A Pedagogical Strategy in Teaching Controversial Public Issues (CPIs)

Clint Jhoed V. De Leon\*, Ruben E. Borja II

Graduate School / Bulacan State University

\*Corresponding author

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.905000169>

Received: 02 May 2025; Accepted: 07 May 2025; Published: 05 June 2025

## ABSTRACT

This research paper describes the utilization of democratic dialogue in teaching CPI in junior high school (JHS) social studies classes in one private school in Hagonoy, Bulacan, Philippines. The researcher interviewed all the JHS social studies teachers and twenty purposeful selected students. The results showed that democratic dialogue have been utilized by the JHS social studies teachers of the school. It was also revealed that democratic dialogue on CPI was beneficial both on the teachers and students. The findings of this study were concentrated on the context of that private school, dependent on small sample size, and reliant on qualitative data which could potentially introduce subjective bias. Nevertheless, the findings implied that teaching CPI through democratic dialogue can enhance student engagement and active participation. Further research could explore the application of democratic dialogue in different contexts with larger sample size to validate these results.

**Keywords:** democratic dialogue, controversial public issues (CPI), social studies education, student engagement

## INTRODUCTION

Addressing CPIs in the classroom in the spirit of critical inquiry is a scale that measures the overall effectiveness of social studies teaching [7]. In a pluralistic country like the Philippines, teaching CPIs in the classroom is challenging for teachers, as it requires educators to facilitate a discussion that is driven by multiple perspective brought by various diversifying factors such as ethnolinguistic groups, social classes, and religion. Another thing that hindered teachers to teach CPIs was their unfamiliarity with the issue. Researches also revealed that teacher's inferiority to address CPIs in class was due to their fear to outset conflict between students and eventually lose classroom control.

These challenges must be overcome by the teachers as classroom is denoted as a "safe space" for values and ideas to be explored. So, it is a must for educators to provide valuable opportunities to have significant conversations on CPIs within the classroom.

Internationally, abundant empirical evidences recommended democratic dialogue (a novel method for teaching CPI) to be utilized by teachers to teach CPIs in the classroom ([25],[13]). In addition, this approach was described as a participatory development process as it involves all concerned into the conversation.

Likewise, numerous findings from various studies justified the effectiveness of democratic dialogue in teaching CPIs than traditional methods like lectures. Because, dialogue facilitates understanding and finds solution rather than narrowing the perspective to arrive at a single answer and suppress other perspectives, which happens in a debate.

In the light of aforementioned factors, the researcher decided to describe the utilization of democratic dialogue as a pedagogical strategy in teaching CPIs. Particularly, in junior high school (JHS) social studies classes in one private school in Hagonoy, Bulacan, Philippines.

## Objectives

This study aimed to describe the utilization of democratic dialogue in teaching CPI in JHS social studies in one private school in Hagonoy, Bulacan, Philippines.

Specifically, this sought to answer the following:

1. How do social studies teachers define CPI?
2. How do social studies teachers identify an issue as CPI?
3. How do teachers and students describe democratic dialogue?
4. How do social studies teachers utilize democratic dialogue as a pedagogical strategy in teaching CPI?
5. How does the implementation of democratic dialogue as a pedagogical strategy influence teachers' ability to address CPI in the social studies classroom?
6. How does democratic dialogue engage students in the learning process compared to traditional teaching methods?
7. What are the benefits that students gain in engaging in democratic dialogue on CPI?

## METHODS

The study employed a phenomenological approach, a qualitative research design, to explore the lived experience of teachers and students in utilizing democratic dialogue as pedagogical approach in addressing CPI in JHS social studies in one private school in Hagonoy, Bulacan, Philippines.

The respondents of the study were purposely selected to extract valid and reliable results. This includes the 100% of JHS social studies teachers and twenty JHS students who are Bonafide enrollees of that private school during the school year 2024 – 2025.

In collecting data, the researcher utilized a validated semi-structured interview questionnaire. Prior to the data collection, permit to conduct the study from the office of the school directress was secured. Also, informed-consent form for teachers and minor-ascent form for students were provided accordingly.

The collected qualitative data were treated through “In Vivo Coding” and “Focus Coding” to extract themes. Furthermore, to establish the validity of findings, the researcher employed member checking or respondent validation to ensure that the themes created by the researcher strictly conforms with the respondents' statements.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Social Studies Teachers' Definition of CPIs

The teachers were asked to define CPIs in the context of social studies. The results of interview resurfaced two themes that encompass the meaning of CPI. The themes that have been identified are present in the table below.

Table 1 Merged Themes on CPI Definition in the Context of Social Studies

Rank	Themes
1	Issues that are impactful to society
2	Issues that diversify opinions

CPI in the context of social studies is defined by the teachers as issues that are impactful to society and has the capacity to diversify opinions. According to them, it has impact on society due to the nature of its subject, commonly grounded on social studies concepts such as politics, economics, and culture. Additionally, it is impactful to society as it is relevant to learners' lives. Hence, it is a must for these issues to be integrated in social studies subject even it is not part of mandated curriculum and not covered by textbooks.

TR1: “ito yung mga isyung panlipunan na wala siya sa book pero kailangan matutunan ng bata at ito yung mga issue na kailangan alam ng bata kasi nangyayari siya sa Pilipinas” (these are social issues not included in text books but needed to be learned by the students as it occurs in our country – the Philippines)

TR3: “they are related to politics, the economics, culture, or anything else”

This finding is consistent with the content of the book *Hard Questions* by [24] Pace (2021), wherein, CPI were problems or disputes that divide the society into significant groups that offers explanations and solutions in accordance to their withheld values. Likewise, it is also a question to public policy that sparks disagreements. Furthermore, it was emphasized that controversial public issues are embedded in history as it includes contested questions from the past.

On the other hand, the teachers also mentioned that it has the capacity to diversify opinions as CPI can cause conflicting viewpoints which leads to debate. This is natural for a pluralistic nation just like the Philippines, in which disparities exist on most aspects [13]

TR2: “issues often involve conflicts, debate, elicit various opinions”

TR3: “This relates to conflicting viewpoints that individuals in society ought to talk about”

Moreover, since the teachers are cognizant with the essence of CPI not just a topic for classroom discussion but as issues that personally affects the students’ lives. Curriculum developers of that private school must consider crafting a formal guide on how CPI discussions can be integrated in Social Studies. This is not a quixotic recommendation, as private schools are allowed by the Department of Education to modify or craft a specialized curriculum as long as it is still adherent to existing and mandated laws (Section 3 of 2010 Revised Manual of Regulations for Private Schools in Basic Education).

### Teachers’ Criteria in Identifying a CPI and Its Example

The social studies teachers identified three criteria they utilized in identifying and issue as CPI. Also, they give an example of a recent CPI issue that they have identified. The table below presents the following criteria utilized by the teachers and the epitome of a recent CPI.

Table 2 Merged Themes on Criteria in Identifying CPI and Its Example

Criteria	Example
Impact to Society	Arrest of Former President Rodrigo R. Duterte
Capacity to Diversify Opinion	
Emotional Sensitivity	

Social studies teachers were consistent with the definition the mentioned. Again, the “impact to society” and “capacity to diversify opinion” recurred. However, these two were augmented by emotional sensitivity. According to them, the relevance of issues to societal problem and its ability to split mass’s opinion are only external characteristics of CPI. In-depth examination to CPI will enable us to view emotional sensitivity among its facets. Emotional sensitivity was not elaborated further by the respondents, but if examined deeply, it is the capacity of CPI to trigger anger and other extreme emotional response.

T3: “A controversial public issue is characterized by strong opposing viewpoints... and psychological and emotional sensitivity.”

Research by [30] Sactre (2021) supports this finding, based on the results emotion is an element that sustain the discussion of CPI. While, [11] Garrett & Alvey (2020), identified three emotional registers present in the discussion of CPI, aggression, withholding, and reversals. Considering the coherence of the studies finding with the existing literature, it can be concluded that emotion is an inherent component of CPI discussions.

Based on the cited criteria, the teacher respondents tend to collectively state the arrest of former President Rodrigo R. Duterte as the example of recent CPI. Because, this issue is remarkably sensational and impactful to Philippine society. It is evident on all news platform that this issue is the headline since March 11, 2025. The split between “uniteam” supporters manifest the massive societal effect of this issue. The aggressive stance of Duterte Diehard Supporters (DDS), their withholding to their support to Duterte family, and their reversal from supporting President Marcos Jr. reflects the emotional realities of this issue.

### Democratic Dialogue in the Lenses of Teachers

The employment of democratic dialogue in teaching CPI in the context of that private school have been narrated by JHS social studies teachers and students. Upon the interview with the teachers, there were two identified themes. These are presented on the table below:

Table 3 Merged Themes on Democratic Dialogue on Teaching CPI

Rank	Themes
1	Employed student-centered activities and strategies
2	Established a safe and respectful classroom environment

The teachers utilized various student-centered activities and strategies in employing democratic dialogue in teaching CPI. Among these activities and strategies were debates, small group discussions, open-ended questions, media analysis, and others. These were implemented in the pursuit of active participation of all learners.

TR1: “debate, small group discussion, recitation”

TR2: “Debates, open-ended questions, and reflection paper”

TR3: “Historical text analysis with guide questions, Historical Movie Analysis”

Most of these activities and strategies also appeared on some books and studies regarding democratic dialogue or dialogic teaching. Such as debates from *Democratic Dialogue: A Handbook for Practitioners* by [28] Pruitt & Thomas (2007), small group discussion and reflection paper appeared in the presentation of *From Controversy to Dialogue: Strategies for Teaching Contentious Topics in the Classroom* by [22] O’Neil (2023), and the use of open-ended questions was listed among the strategies in *Dialogic Teaching: A classroom guide for better thinking and talking* by [18]. For few strategies that not have been mentioned by the studies and books above were subject for further research and practice to establish its validity. It reflects the wide array of possibilities for this approach to be enhanced.

Also, the establishment of an open, safe, and respectful environment was conceptualized and practiced in the context of that private school. According to the teacher respondents, in the utilization of democratic dialogue they ensure that the classroom welcomes all opinions from the learners. Also, they assured that the classroom is a safe space and respectful environment for the dialogue on a certain CPI.

TR1: “all students will be able to speak if, of course, you will say that there is no bias, there is no right, there is no wrong”

TR2: “Establish a safe, respectful classroom environment”

TR3: “creating a respectful and open classroom environment”

Results from various studies express consensus regarding this theme. For instance, [1] Alcarazen (2022) claimed that classroom was a safe space for construction, co-construction, and reconstruction of students’ perceptions and worldviews. Similarly, [25] Padilla (2023) described classroom as a “safe space” where students have the

freedom to express their perceptions while respecting others' freedom to express as well. While, [36] Williams & Quaid (2023) presumed that the construction and maintenance of a classroom as a safe space was a responsibility of teachers. Again, this presumed responsibility has been fulfilled by JHS social studies teachers.

Moreover, the employment of student-centered activities and strategies must be sustained by the teachers. The number of cited teaching strategies can be further augmented through participating in professional development programs. Likewise, making classroom as a "safe space" must be transferred intergenerationally on the succeeding social studies teachers.

### Democratic Dialogue Based on Students Point of View

The point of view of the learners regarding democratic dialogue was also elicited, as it is significant in describing the utilization of this approach in teaching CPI in social studies classes. The following themes that are presented in the table below are results of thorough interview conducted with the twenty JHS student respondents.

Table 4 Merged Themes on Democratic Dialogue based on Students Point of View

Rank	Themes
1	Provide safe space for inclusive participation
2	Engage them in the learning process
3	Help them find resolution in a peaceful manner

Based on students' perspective about democratic dialogue it is apparent that this approach made classrooms as safe space for inclusive participation. Wherein, learners transform their classroom is not just a space for learning but rather a safe space where all of them can engage in a dialogue on a certain CPI. This is consistent with the findings of [1] Alcazaren (2022), which stated that classrooms were turned by most students into safe spaces to "construct, co-construct, and re-construct" their perceptions and interpretations of worldviews. Additionally, the construction and maintenance of safe space often presumed as responsibility of teachers but definitely it lies to the students [36]. In the context of that private school, both teachers and learners took the responsibility in constructing and transforming classrooms into a space where all voice can be heard. Below are the particular responses of the students:

SR9: "nagkakaroon po kami ng chance para ibahagi po yung mga natutunan namin or yung mga opinion namin" (we are given chance to share our learnings and opinions)

SR18: "everyone's voice is heard and valued. It's a space where we can share different perspectives, question ideas and critically analyze issues without fear of judgment"

SR19: "it gives us opportunity hindi lang para ano sa sarili namin pero para din sa iba na naririnig 'yung side namin at naririnig din po namin 'yung side nila" (we are given opportunity to speak and to hear their perspectives)

Democratic dialogue is also viewed by the students as an approach that engage them in the learning process. Due to its explicit element which is active participation that attracts them to take part in the learning process. According to the students, democratic dialogue engages them in the learning process as it requires active participation, especially when compared to lecture method that elicits minimal participation from learners. This finding is similar to what [16] Kolbe (2024) & [31] Schneider (2025) found out in their study, democratic dialogue engages students because of active participation which was not offered by other approaches such as lecture and rote memorization. Based on the interview with the students, democratic dialogue indeed involves them in the learning process, exchanging of thoughts and ideas throughout the class was present during the process. The following quoted texts below are their statements aligned with this theme:

SR3: "napapahayag ng walang awayan at alitan. Walang awayan o kagalitan ano" (we express our



thoughts peacefully)

SR4: “lahat kami nag-aano na sasagot parang lahat kailangan iniintindi namin 'yung sagot ng isa't isa”  
(all of us express our answers and we tried to understand each perspective)

Also, learners found democratic dialogue as helpful in resolving problem in a peaceful manner. As described by the students, despite the conflicting ideologies from opposing opinions they always derived solutions without having personal conflicts with their classmates. They were respectfully raising their opinions, constructively criticize opposing views, and thoroughly understanding each point of view. This finding also reflects the essence of democratic dialogue as a “tool for conflict resolution” in the book of [28] Pruitt & Thomas (2007) titled, “Democratic Dialogue – A Handbook for Practitioners”. Whereby, this approach was a deliberative process that fosters cooperation, consensus, or at least mutual understanding among participants. The following cited responses below from the students adhere with this theme:

SR14: “individual participation tulad po ng ginagawa namin, nag-groupings po kami, nagtutulungan po kami kung paano mag- nag- ah solve ng problem” (individual participation just like we have done, group collaborations, where we work together to solve a problem)

SR18: “our class engaged in democratic dialogue by exchanging opinions, supporting arguments with evidence and listening to opposing viewpoints”

Collectively, the students of that private school are aware and familiar with democratic dialogue as they can describe it in various ways. The regard for this approach as a transforming pedagogy to which classroom become safe space for exploring CPI must be maintain through the cooperation of all stakeholders, including students, teachers, school administrators, and parents. Also, participation of teacher to professional development programs is highly recommended to further enhance their skills. In addition, the perception of students to this approach as engaging and conflict resolution tool must be sustained and enhanced by the teachers. However, the learners missed one description of democratic dialogue, the “dialogue as a public technology” [12]. In the light of this inadequacy, the researcher suggested to the teachers and administrators to foster cognizance among learners that dialogue is also a “public technology” that is utilized to frame public issues.

### Utilization of Democratic Dialogue in Teaching CPI

Social studies teachers were also asked to share their experience in utilizing democratic dialogue in teaching CPI in their classroom. Their responses to the question were scaffold by supplementary questions such as “what made it successful” and “what challenges emerge, and “how they overcome it”. The interview resulted on three identified themes regarding the utilization of democratic dialogue in teaching CPI in classrooms. The following themes are presented on the table below.

Table 5 Utilization of Democratic Dialogue in Teaching CPI

Focus	Themes
Success Indicator	Students are active in the discussion
Challenges during the Session	Encouraging other students to speak
	Arguments are lacking in logic and sense
	Occasionally get bias in sharing own perception
Coping Strategies	Act as active facilitator

A democratic dialogue session on CPI discussion in the classroom is successful when students are active in the discussion. The teacher respondents asserted, their students are steering the discussion with little supervision and they are confidently raising their thoughts.

TR1: “they give an opinion when I talk to them”

TR2: “able to voice out their thoughts regardless of their stands”

TR3: “Students became vocal about their rights and accepted competing viewpoints since the class discussed an important public topic”

Research by [19] Mano (2020) found out that democratic classrooms empowered learners, engaged them in the learning process, and enhanced their critical-thinking. Likewise, [10] Garcia-Carrion et al. (2020) highlighted that the significance of active participation in classroom discussion is development of sense of ownership of learning among students. Most probably these are the reasons why most of JHS students of that private school are engaged in democratic dialogue on CPI.

On the other hand, challenges in democratic dialogue sessions were also identified by the teachers. Although, most of students were active during the sessions, there were still timid learners. They insist that there is a need for further encouragement to boost students' confidence and participation.

TR1: “need to encourage them to speak because not all students have the confidence to speak in front of classmates”

The abundance of coping strategies with this problem highlights its existence across different context. For instance, in the article Strategies to Get All Students Participating of [20] Martin (2023) discussed various technique to make all learners participative in the classroom discussion, such as think-pair-share, thinking routines, and silent engagement like polls and sticky notes. In addition, [2] Bleske-Rechek (2025) suggested that creating structured opportunities to learners will boost students' confidence to participate in civic dialogues in classroom. Hence, these approaches must be applied to the JHS classrooms of that private school to boost the participation and engagement of timid learners.

Illogical and senseless arguments were constraints in conducting democratic dialogue in the classrooms. Some JHS students fall short in providing logical arguments in engaging in a dialogue, particularly, fallacious statements such as “ad hominem” and “non-sequitur” were common.

TR2: “Some of the answers are illogical, like personals and not connected answers”

This finding is similar to [33] Sedova et al. (2014), “lack of rational augmentation” was one of the problems identified in dialogic teaching. Wherein, students failed to elaborate or clarify their previous responses. Recently, [29] Rapanta et al. (2023) suggested that to solve this insufficiency in reasoning can be scaffold by proper prompts in questioning student response. Applying the relevance of these findings to the context of that private school, JHS social studies teachers can utilize question prompts to redirect student responses.

Sharing of personal perception regarding the issue was inevitable according to the teachers. They tend to express their own views on times when students' arguments were leaning on the wrong the side.

TR3: “occasionally get biased as a teacher since I can't help but share my prejudice with the class”

This teaching approach in CPI discussion through dialogic teaching is among the six relevant teaching styles by the [4] Council of Europe (2020). Particularly, the stated commitment approach, this requires teacher to make their own views known in the exploration of an issue. However, this is not always advised as students may easily accept this due to teachers' authority in the classroom. Since, one of the six teaching styles is cited, teachers can explore the other such as “devil's advocate” to which teacher express opposing arguments or “balanced approach” where teachers can present various alternatives without exposing personal point of view.

In the light of aforementioned challenges, JHS social studies teachers resolved this by being an active facilitator of the learning process. Some of the strategies they implemented were words of encouragement to boost learners' participation, allowing them to reconstruct their arguments whenever it is faulty, and demonstrating how to make an argument grounded on factual basis.

TR1: “what I will do is encourage students to participate”

TR1: “I let them reconstruct their thoughts by asking a leading yet unbiased question”

TR3: “I use books and other data sources. I also add facts and different viewpoints to add variety to the discussion”

Moreover, the success of a democratic dialogue session is manifested in the active involvement of the learners in the process. However, some restraining factors persist during the learning process such as non-participation of few learners, lack of logic in reasoning, and personal biases of the teachers. Furthermore, these were resolved by JHS social studies teachers by utilizing words of encouragement, opportunities for response reconstruction, and giving examples on how to anchor arguments on facts.

### Influence of Democratic Dialogue on Teacher’s Ability to Address CPI

The influence of democratic dialogue on JHS social studies teachers’ ability to address CPI was also explored. Based on the interview there was a common theme that described how this approach affects their ability to address CPI in the classroom. This theme and its indicators are presented on the table below.

Table 6 Influence of Democratic Dialogue on Teacher’s Ability to Address CPI

Theme	Indicators
Enhanced Pedagogy	Convenience in handling CPI discussion
	Allow them to explore more approach in teaching CPI
	Learning became more engaging and interactive

One common theme resurfaced on the influence of democratic dialogue on JHS social studies teachers’ ability to address CPI. This was enhanced pedagogy, which was described by three indicators such as convenience in handling CPI discussion, allow them to explore further different approaches in teaching CPI, and learning became more engaging and interactive.

TR1: (1) “it’s easier to teach the children since what they will learn here is how they will take an issue and what will be their stance on the issue”

(2) “it’s more fun for the kids, it’s more engaging, they really enjoy it”

TR2: (1) “exposes me to different perspectives that challenge me to find a more suitable approach I’ve never done before”

(2) “It became more interactive and more engaging”

TR3: “This helped me in expanding my knowledge, particularly in the area of social studies”

Considering the challenges they previously mentioned, these challenges did not restrain teachers to enhance their pedagogy. In fact, ease in teaching CPI and wide road of possibilities have been noticed by teachers upon implementing this approach to the JHS classrooms.

The findings of this study about the influence of democratic dialogue on teachers’ ability to address CPI opposes the negative results reported by various researches. Like, uncertainty to take positions or staying neutral and insufficiency in education and experience to facilitate tense full discussions [27] (Pouwels, 2024). This was defied by the teachers of that private school by exposing their point of view just to redirect students wrong leaning argument. Also, despite of being young in teaching career they took the risk in facilitating CPI discussion in the classroom. Another was from [17] Magill & Blevins (2020), most of the time teaching CPIs is not included in their pedagogy. Again, the teachers boldly attempt to integrate in their classroom the teaching of CPIs through



democratic dialogue.

The convenience in handling CPI discussion through democratic dialogue resulted from the dedication and boldness of JHS social studies teachers. These enable them to possess proficiency in facilitating democratic dialogue.

Moreover, study by [24] Pace (2021) offered a possibility to be explored by the JHS social studies teachers. This was the “contained-risk approach” which covers solution for some identified challenges in the previous discussion and cited additional strategies to prevent the occurrence of future difficulties. This approach follows eight steps such as; (1) cultivation of warm and supportive classroom environment, (2) thorough preparation and planning, (3) reflection on teacher identity and roles, (4) proactive communication with parents, other teachers, and administrators, (5) careful selection, timing, and framing of issues, (6) emphasis on creative resources and group activities, (7) steering of discussion, and (8) dealing with emotional conflicts.

Furthermore, the finding about engaging and interactive learning process must be further sustained and enhanced by the teachers. Because, according to the study of [35] Sudha (2018), sustaining students’ engagement was one of the problems encountered in teaching CPI through dialogic process.

In summary, in the context of JHS social studies teachers, democratic dialogue enhances their ability to address CPI in the classroom. This approach helps them to teach CPI conveniently, give them opportunities to explore more possibilities in teaching, and made learning process engaging and interactive.

### Engagement of Students in Democratic Dialogue in CPI

The engagement of the learners on democratic dialogue in class is vital in describing the utilization of this approach in teaching CPI in social studies classes. Their participation was explored by asking them a specific topic where they participated, identify the roles in discussion, tell their preference between traditional method or democratic dialogue, and state the shift in the level of performance. There are four tables presented in this section showing merged themes on CPI topics, roles in democratic dialogue on CPI, preference between traditional method or democratic dialogue, and shift in level of performance.

#### A. CPI Topics on Democratic Dialogue

Table 7 Common CPI Topic in STA

Rank	Themes
1	Political and Historical Issues
2	Economic Issues
3	Gender and Sex Issues

It can be gleaned in this table that the common CPIs topic in JHS social studies classes in that private are political and historical issues, economic issues, and gender and sex issues. The political and historical issues are common responses of grade 7 and 8 learners. While, economic issues are responses of grade 9 learners. Then, issues that revolves around gender and sex are prevalent answers of grade 10 learners. The pattern of responses based on the grade level of the learners unfolds that the issues upbringing in the classroom are based on the subject focus of each grade level. For instance, political and historical issues are common CPIs in grade level 7 and 8 because the content of social studies 7 is “History of the Philippines and Southeast Asian Region” and social studies 8 is “World History”. So, it is innate in the subject to have those CPIs. To be particular here are some responses of 7th and 8th grader learners:

SR1: “Yung pag-aresto po kay Duterte. Ah 'yung pag-aresto kay Duterte.” (The arrest of Duterte)

SR2: “Kay President former President Rodrigo Duterte.” (Regarding former President Rodrigo Duterte)

SR4: “Sa ASEAN...” (Regarding ASEAN)

SR5: “Yung kay Adolf Hitler po. Kay Adolf Hitler.” (Regarding Adolf Hitler)

Meanwhile, grade 9 learners tend to cite economic issues as CPIs topic mainly because social studies 9 is concentrated in studying “Economics” as a subject. Then, grade 10 learners cited a specific category of a current issue such gender and sex issue, again due to the subject content of social studies 10 which is “Contemporary Issues”. To concretize, here are some specific answers from the respondents:

SR11: “topic po namin sa agriculture or industry” (Our topic on agriculture and industry)

SR13: “sector of industry and agriculture”

SR16: “during uh LGBTQIA po in class” (during LGBTQIA lesson in class)

SR20: “One situation is about us discussing about the LGBTQIA”

To reiterate, upon analyzing the pattern of responses and relating it to the grade level of the respondents. The researcher found out that the upbringing of CPIs topic on JHS social studies classes depends on the specific content in each grade level.

## B. Roles in Democratic Dialogue on CPI

Table 8 Roles in Democratic Dialogue on CPI

Rank	Themes
1	Teacher as a facilitator in CPI discussion
2	Learners as the drivers of CPI discussion through democratic dialogue

In the table above, the roles fulfilled by teachers and learners are presented. Teacher as facilitator and learners as the drivers of CPI discussion through democratic dialogue resurfaced on the responses of the JHS students of that private school. Various facilitating strategies have been employed by the teachers upon conducting democratic dialogue on CPI. According to the learners, their teachers raised the CPI in class through a question, instruct students to be considerate and respectful, and immediately correct misconceptions and faulty opinions. To support this, below are responses of learners consistent with this theme:

SR1: “Tinanong po ni Ma'am kami kung ano po sa tingin namin kung agree po ba kami” (our teacher ask us regarding our stand in an issue)

SR16: “yung teacher po namin pinagsasabihan po sila na dapat magkaroon po ng respeto sa isa't isa” (our teacher told us to be respectful on each other)

SR17: “if meron naman pong pagkakamali ikokorect naman po kami ng teacher namin and open po kami sa mga opinions ng kada isa po” (if there are mistakes our teacher corrects us and we are open to each opinion)

Some facilitator roles of teachers that have been identified in this study reflects the teaching styles present in the Training Packs of Teacher by [4] Council of Europe (2020). The neutral chairperson approach, who only acts as facilitator of discussion of CPI. Another, is the balanced approach, those teachers who correct the wrong opinion of learners and offers various alternatives manifest this role.

However, the Freire’s Dialogic Pedagogy by [8] Freire (1970) opposed the notion that teachers are “mere” facilitators of learning in a dialogue, instead it was recommended that teacher’s role should be “co-learner”; transforming the classroom into “egalitarian plain” where the idea of authority is no longer valid. In addition,

the teachers' role of co-learner in the learning process have been explored by several studies such as ([5], [15], & [31]. In the light of the aforementioned theories and studies, the role of co-learner must be explored by the teachers in conducting democratic dialogue on CPIs.

On the other hand, JHS students are seen to be the drivers of CPI discussions through democratic dialogue in their classroom. The students took full responsibility in the exchange of opinions, ensuring tranquility in the classroom amidst the existence of conflicting ideologies. Students attitude towards each other exhibits understanding and cooperation to solve problems. Similarly, this is also present in Buber's Dialogic Philosophy, the existence of dialogue comes because of the establishment of I and You relationship [14]. This established dialogue will help participants to solve certain issue based on the consensus of I and You. Contextualizing it to the attitudes of the JHS students in democratic dialogue in CPI, it is lucid, comprehending each other notion and working together are essential in the process of democratic dialogue in CPI.

SR4: "Kahit magkakaiba po 'yung opinyon namin, 'yung merong agree or disagree, hindi po kami nag-aaway or nagkakagalit" (despite our differing opinions, we did not have personal conflicts or disputes)

SR8: "kailangan din po nating intindihin 'yung mga perspective or 'yung beliefs nila ng isa't isa" (we need to understand each perspective and belief)

SR15: "kami po yung nag-uusap-usap. Kami po yung uh gumagawa ng idi-discuss" (we are the one who engage in the conversation, we also make what to be discussed)

Overall, the experience of JHS students in participating in democratic dialogue in CPI was defined by their core memories on the process, including the topic and the learning process. It is apparent that the upbringing of CPI topics depends upon the specific scope of social studies in each grade level. The researcher recommends to further enhance this practice by contextualizing issues relevant to the lesson content. To produce well-informed and civic engage learners. Furthermore, it is also suggested for teachers to continue participating in professional development programs that offers novel approach in handling CPI discussion through democratic dialogue.

### Students Preference Between Traditional Method and Democratic Dialogue

Table 9 Preference Between Traditional Method and Democratic Dialogue

Preference	Rationale	Number of Students
Democratic Dialogue	Explicit element such as active participation convince them to engage	18
	Implicit factor such as knowledge increase and skill enhancement made them engage	
Lecture Method	Approach that works best for us	2

This table presents the students' preference between democratic dialogue and lecture, the rationale for their preferred approach, and number of students who chose. The given number of students who preferred democratic dialogue is sufficient to declare that majority of JHS students of that private school preferred democratic dialogue than lecture method. The explicit element of active participation and implicit factors such as knowledge increase and skill enhancement convinced learners to engage in democratic dialogue in discussing CPIs. Here are some of their responses:

### Active Participation

SR3: "Binibigyan kami ng chance magsalita" (we are given chance to speak)

SR5: "lahat po nakakapagbigay ng opinions nila and mga solution or knowledge po" (all of us share opinion, solution to a problem, and knowledge)

## Knowledge Increase

SR1: “mas makakaalam po kami ng mas marami sa mga public issues” (we became more knowledgeable on public issues)

## Skill Enhancement

SR11: “mas uh para pong mas nasasanay po ako na mag-look ng parang masasanay po ako na ako lang yung nag-aaral” (it seems that I learn how to study independently)

SR12: “mas parang gumagana yung utak namin pag nagpa-participate kami” (our brain functions better if we are participative)

[16] Kolbe (2024) & [32] Schneider (2025) reported similar findings, the “active participation” that is an apparent element of democratic dialogue persuaded learners to engage in the teaching-learning process. Also, according to the same authors, democratic dialogue also offered implicit convincing factor such as the embedded challenge in the process which test the analytical and evaluative capacities of learners who immersed themselves.

Conversely, those few who chose lecture method justifies their preference by asserting that this best works for them.

SR7: “It's easier to monitor when you are in a lecture method”

SR20: “lectures are more uh lectures work for me best because I'm not really a spokesperson or whatever but I'm I'm more into writing”

This signifies that democratic dialogue is not preferred by the total population of JHS students of that private school. These two respondents are representation of those students who still prefer traditional methods likes lecture. Additionally, SR20 who answered lecture method considered ability and strength in adhering with this approach.

Moreover, majority of JHS students preferred democratic dialogue over lecture method due to the explicit and implicit convincing factors. However, it is still a must to consider the preference of minority to cultivate an active environment. Hence, it is suggested to the teachers to utilized “contained-risk approach” by Diana Hess, in framing and strategizing the discussion of CPI in the classroom.

## Shift in Level of Participation

Table 10 Shift in Level of Participation of Students

Themes	Number of Students
Increase in level of participation	19
Remains the same	1

It can be gleaned in this table the two derived themes regarding the shift in level of participation of JHS students in democratic dialogue in CPI. Almost total of the respondents reported that their participation level in democratic dialogue significantly increase, while only one of them reported that the participation level remains the same. This finding seems to be conflicting what is reported in students’ preference between traditional method and democratic dialogue. To reconcile this, one of the two respondents who chose lecture noticed increase in the level of participation in democratic dialogue.

SR20: “Right now it's been increasing since the last time I've uh participated in those, but um it increased”

Moreover, this result is relatively synonymous with [33] Sedova (201), to which increase in students’

participation in dialogic teaching was seen in lower secondary schools in Czech Republic. Taking into account the aforementioned findings, the researcher recommended to the teachers of JHS social studies of that private school to further encourage those learners who are not participative. Again, the same authors also revealed that there was a positive relationship between the increase participation of learners and quality of talk in dialogic teaching. So, it is significant in the context of that private school to sustain and increase the participation level of learners.

### Benefits of Engaging in Democratic Dialogue in CPI

Table 11 Benefits of Engaging in Democratic Dialogue in CPI

Rank	Themes
1	Self-confidence
2	Communication Skills
3	Social Awareness
4	Respect and Empathy
5	Critical-thinking Skills
6	Collaboration Skills
7	Eagerness to Learn

The table above presents the seven identified benefits that JHS students of that private school gained in engaging in democratic dialogue in CPI. The following themes are as follow: self-confidence; communication skills; social awareness; respect and empathy; critical-thinking skills; collaboration skills; and eagerness to learn.

The self-confidence is the top identified benefit by the JHS students. Based on the interview, most of them who were inferior to express their thought in the class are now confident enough to speak about their opinions. Democratic dialogue in CPIs honed their capability to be vocal with their initiatives. This benefit was also cited by [6] Democracy Ready NY (2022), students' confidence was also boost by this approach as they were given platform to voice out their ideas.

SR2: "tapos hindi na po ako medyo natatakot pag nagsha-share ako ng ideas" (my fears in sharing ideas slightly reduce)

SR8: "pagsasalita po sa mga tao hindi na po ako masyadong nahihiya" (I became more confident on public speaking)

SR20: "I've been more confident when sharing my thoughts and also comprehension"

It is followed by communication skills, aside from conquering the inferiority of JHS students, they also enhanced their communication skills. According to them aside from confidently speaking in front of the class, they were able to connect with their classmates and articulate their ideas clearly. This is consistent to the findings of the analysis of [34] Skinner (2011) to the book *Controversy in the Classroom: The Power of Democratic Discussion* by Hess (2009), which also identified communication skills as a benefit in engaging in dialogue. Skinner (2011) stated, communication skills of students were also expanded as they are necessitated to express and articulate their thoughts in a clear manner.

SR7: "that I get to exercise my public speaking skills"

SR8: "na-enhance ko 'yung skills ko sa sa public speaking" (my public speaking skills was enhance)

SR18: "I learned how to express my thoughts in discussions and I improved my ability to articulate ideas clearly"



Social awareness is the third identified by the JHS students. Based on the results, learners' knowledge on issues were expanded and they relate how social issues affects them as citizens. [9] Ganzler (2022) asserted the same, social awareness of the students will be increased as they will become informed citizens on social, political, and economic challenges that revolves around them.

SR1: "mas marami po kaming nalalaman sa public issues" (I became more knowledgeable on public issues)

SR15: "naie-enhance po po sa akin personally yung um pag-understand pa ng topic, mas titingnan mo kung ano yung nagiging effect nito, mas titingnan mo kung paano ito nangyayari sa economy natin nowadays" (my ability to understand was enhanced, I see the effects of issues vividly, and I learn to look how those economic events nowadays)

Learner's respect and empathy was also fostered by democratic dialogue on CPIs. In the context of JHS students, they learn how to value and consider other perspectives even though it opposes their own. They learn how to contextualize other experience to better understand their notions. Again, this finding is the same on one of the benefits identified by [6] Democracy Ready NY (2022), empathy and respect of students were developed as they learned to appreciate various perspective and respect other opinions, this could potentially reduce polarization in the classroom.

SR16: "Dahil nga po nalalaman ko po nagiging malawak po 'yung isip ko sa mga opinion po ng iba't ibang tao po" (because I learn, it leads me to broaden my perspective which help me to appreciate other opinion)

SR19: "nagiging focus ako sa mga topic na 'yun and mas in-o-open ko siya sa sarili din, sa sa ating sa mga classmates at sa mga nakaka-rinig sa akin na nag-ano" (I became focus on the topic and I open it better on myself, to my classmates who listen to those who speak)

Aside from those benefits above, the JHS students also reported that their critical-thinking skills also improved. Upon being immersed in democratic dialogue on CPIs, respondents noticed that their capacity to analyze and evaluate various perspective have sharpen. They did not just accept the perspective of their classmates but they critically examined it before absorbing. Similarly, it was the first identified benefit by [34] Skinner (2011) analysis, this pedagogical strategy students can enhance students' critical-thinking skills as their ability to "analyze various perspective, evaluate evidence, and form reasoned arguments" were tested by this approach.

SR3: "nagiging critical thinker ako sa mga issues" (I became critical-thinker on the issues)

SR10: "yung na-improve ko po 'yung critical thinking skills ko din" (I improved my critical-thinking skills)

Collaboration skills of JHS students were also enhanced. The learners cited significant imprints of improved collaboration skills. Among these imprints were the improvement on their ability to work as a team or group. This benefit extends beyond their capacity to have informed-decision. Although, the quotation "two heads are better than one" was considered worn-out, its essence amplifies the significance of working as a team or collaborating with many people.

SR11: "mas ah nasasanay po ako na may kasama parang tulong-tulong po kami" (I learn how to work with my classmates like collaboration)

SR13: "natuto rin ako ano kung paano mag work as a team" (I learned how to work as a team)

Lastly, eagerness to learn was the least identified by the JHS students. According to them, through democratic dialogue, their classmates who were previously uninterested in the subject are now exhibiting willingness to learn further as they actively participate in the learning process.

SR12: "mas nagiging ano din po silang matuto kasi kami nga lang po yung nagpe-present diba in ourselves" (they become interested in learning because we are the one who present the topics)

Moreover, considering the abundance of benefits that students could gain in engaging on democratic dialogue on CPI. JHS social studies teachers must continue to integrate democratic dialogue sessions on CPIs. It is highly recommended for the teachers to participate in professional development programs to further enhance their capacity in utilizing their approach and augment the possible benefits that this approach has to offer.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the aforementioned results, it is evident that democratic dialogue is a pedagogical approach utilized by the JHS social studies teachers and students of a private school in Hagonoy, Bulacan, Philippines.

JHS social studies teachers have three main criteria in identifying an issue as CPI. It must have an impact to society, capacity to diversify opinions, and emotional sensitivity. The arrest of Former President Duterte is considered as the current epitome of CPI in the Philippines. As it encompasses all the cited criteria regarding the determination of CPI.

Democratic dialogue based on JHS social studies teachers' perspective, is a student-centered approach that utilizes various activities such as debates, discussions, and reflective writing to which classrooms are transformed into a participatory environment. Upon the utilization of this approach, teachers emphasized the need for a safe and respectful classroom where all opinions are welcomed and explored without bias. On the other hand, JHS students perceived this approach as a safe and inclusive approach, which enabled them to express their thoughts and consider their fellow's point of view. They value this approach due to their appreciation on how it encourages participation and foster understanding while helping them to resolute conflicts harmoniously.

The JHS social studies teachers utilize democratic dialogue as a pedagogical strategy by employing student-centered activities such as debates, small group discussions, and open-ended questions. Establishment of ground rules that guarantees respect and consideration among learners are ways of facilitating the discussion. Teachers act as a facilitator while providing opportunities to students to take an active role in expressing their opinion and challenging each other's perspective. They implement strategies to encourage active and inclusive participation and address logical fallacies in the arguments, which guide learners to refine their reasoning ability.

In addition, it is also apparent that JHS social studies teacher's pedagogy was enhanced by democratic dialogue. The convenience in facilitating discussions on CPIs, opportunities to explore various teaching approaches, and engaging and interactive learning environment, empowered teachers to boldly address sensitive topics in the classroom. This supports their professional growth and enhances their ability to facilitate discussions effectively.

Moreover, democratic dialogue evidently engages students more effectively than traditional methods such as lectures. Active participation among learners had been cultivated by democratic dialogue, this made them devoted in the learning process. Contrary to the passive nature of lectures which elicit minimal engagement, this approach promotes critical interaction among peers, encourages learners to articulate their thoughts, challenge ideas, and develop a deeper understanding of the topics through collaborative discussion. Furthermore, students' engagement on democratic dialogue on CPI empowered them as learners, not by mere knowledge expansion but rather development of skills that could be applied across disciplines and foster lifelong learning.

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