

## ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF GROUP DISCUSSION METHODS IN IMPROVING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN PRIVATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN SINT.

JOSEPH KABANJAHE

Regina Sipayung<sup>1</sup>, Julius Panjaitan<sup>2</sup>, Agnes Monica Br Tarigan<sup>3</sup>, Ngalemisa Br Tarigan<sup>4</sup>,  
Nove Riski Manik<sup>5</sup>, Natalia Matondang<sup>6</sup>, Sri Septiani Simbolon<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5,6,7</sup>Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas, Medan, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup> [sipayungregina1@gmail.com](mailto:sipayungregina1@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the effectiveness of the group discussion method in improving students' critical thinking skills at Sint Private Elementary School. Yoseph Kabanjahe. The research method used was an experiment with a pretest-posttest design, where two groups of students were observed: the experimental group which used the group discussion method and the control group which used conventional learning methods. Data was collected through critical thinking tests before and after treatment, as well as observations and interviews. The results showed that students in the experimental group experienced significant improvements in critical thinking skills compared to the control group, which was reflected in the posttest results. Observations show that students are more actively involved in discussions, have more courage to ask questions, and are able to convey arguments well. This research indicates that group discussions are effective in creating a learning environment that supports the development of students' critical thinking skills. Despite its limitations, these findings provide important implications for educational practice in elementary schools, indicating that the group discussion method can be implemented as an effective learning strategy. Further research is needed to confirm these results and explore variations of learning strategies that can improve critical thinking skills among students. In an educational context that increasingly emphasizes the importance of critical thinking skills to face challenges in the modern world, this research provides valuable insights for educators and policy makers. The research results show that through social interaction in group discussions, students can exchange ideas and deepen their understanding of teaching material. This shows that learning methods that involve active participation of students not only improve academic understanding, but also build interpersonal skills that are important for their social development. Thus, this research recommends that schools, especially at the elementary level, consider implementing group discussion methods as an integral part of the learning curriculum. The implementation of this method is expected to facilitate the development of better critical thinking, while creating a more collaborative and enjoyable learning environment for students. Further research is also recommended to investigate other factors that may influence the success of group discussion methods, such as the teacher's role in facilitating discussion, group structure, and the influence of individual student characteristics on engagement and learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** Discussion Method, Group Skills, Critical Thinking, Basic Education, Collaborative Learning.

### INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking is one of the main skills that must be developed in the current era of globalization and technological advances (Loor & Illescas, 2024). This skill allows a person to analyze information in depth, evaluate various points of view, and make rational decisions based on facts and logic. Given the importance of this ability, education must be able to provide space for students to develop critical thinking skills from an early age, especially at

the elementary school level. However, in practice, learning methods in many schools, including Sint. Yoseph Kabanjahe still tends to be conventional with the teacher as the center of learning who dominates the class. Dominant one-way interaction makes students less actively involved in the teaching and learning process and has an impact on minimal development of critical thinking skills.

The main problem faced at this school is the lack of active participation of students in the learning process. Many students still receive information passively without carrying out critical analysis of the material provided (Prayuda et al., 2024). In addition, the traditional learning methods applied do not provide enough space for students to develop their critical thinking skills. On the other hand, group discussions as an interactive learning method are considered to have great potential in improving students' critical thinking skills. Through group discussions, students can exchange ideas, submit arguments, and evaluate various different points of view from their group friends. This interaction encourages them to engage more deeply in the critical thinking process, because each student is required to not only understand the material, but also be able to express opinions and defend their arguments logically.

However, the application of the group discussion method at Sint. Yoseph Kabanjahe has not been widely studied. Considering the importance of critical thinking skills and the potential of this method, the author feels it is necessary to further explore how the application of the group discussion method in learning can contribute to improving students' critical thinking abilities in this school. It is hoped that this research will provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of the group discussion method as well as the obstacles that may be faced in its implementation. It is hoped that the results of this research can become a basis for developing more effective learning methods in elementary schools, especially in efforts to improve students' critical thinking skills.

This research focuses on several key questions, including whether the group discussion method is effective in improving students' critical thinking skills, what is the process of implementing this method in the classroom, and what challenges are faced in implementing it at the Sint Private Elementary School (Prayuda, 2023). Yoseph Kabanjahe. It is hoped that the answers to these questions will not only be useful for the development of teaching methods in these schools, but will also make a broader contribution to educational practice in Indonesia, especially in the context of developing critical thinking skills among elementary school students. By understanding more about the dynamics of applying the group discussion method, it is hoped that teachers can be more optimal in designing interactive learning and focusing on developing students' thinking abilities.

The findings from this research will also provide practical benefits, especially for teachers, who can use the research results as a guide in applying group discussion methods more effectively. At the school level, the results of this research can be a reference for developing a curriculum that is more oriented towards critical thinking skills, so that students not only focus on mastering the material, but also on the ability to think and analyze critically. Apart from that, this research is also expected to contribute to the further development of educational research, especially those that focus on active and interactive learning methods.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental method to analyze the effect of using the group discussion method on improving students' critical thinking skills. This approach was chosen because it was in accordance with the research objectives which wanted to determine whether there were significant changes in students' critical thinking skills after implementing the group discussion method in the learning process. The following are details of the methods used in this research:

The research was conducted at Sint Private Elementary School. Yoseph Kabanjahe, a private elementary school located in Karo Regency, North Sumatra (Annisa, 2023). The choice of this school was based on the need to improve students' critical thinking skills

through the use of more interactive learning methods. The research participants were fifth grade students, who were chosen because they were at a stage of cognitive development that was considered capable of developing critical thinking skills better. Apart from that, teachers involved in the learning were also research subjects to obtain their views regarding the implementation of the group discussion method.

This research design uses a pretest-posttest control group design model, where students are divided into two groups: the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group received intervention in the form of using group discussion methods in learning, while the control group participated in learning using conventional methods. Before the treatment was given, both groups were given an initial test (pretest) to measure students' critical thinking skills. After that, the experimental group underwent learning using the group discussion method for several meetings, while the control group continued learning using the method usually used. After the learning was completed, both groups were given a final test (posttest) again to see the changes that had occurred in the students' critical thinking skills.

The instrument used to measure students' critical thinking skills in this research was an essay test which was prepared based on indicators of critical thinking skills. These indicators include the ability to analyze, evaluate arguments, construct logical arguments, and make conclusions based on evidence. This test instrument was tested for validity and reliability before being used in research. In addition, direct observations are carried out during the learning process to see the interactions that occur between students in discussion groups, as well as to record discussion dynamics that have the potential to influence the development of their critical thinking skills.

Data collection in this research was carried out through several stages. First, pretest and posttest data were collected to measure the increase in students' critical thinking skills before and after treatment. In addition, observations were made during the lesson to monitor the group discussion process and the level of student participation in the discussion. Interviews were also conducted with teachers to obtain their views regarding the effectiveness of the group discussion method and the obstacles faced during implementation.

To analyze the data obtained, quantitative statistical analysis techniques were used. The t-test was used to compare the pretest and posttest results between the experimental group and the control group. This test was carried out to find out whether there were significant differences between the two groups, as well as to see the effect of the group discussion method on students' critical thinking skills. If the statistical test results show that the average posttest score for the experimental group is significantly higher than the control group, then it can be concluded that the group discussion method is effective in improving students' critical thinking skills.

Next, the observation data was analyzed descriptively to complete the quantitative analysis. This observation aims to identify how the dynamics of the discussion take place, the extent to which students are actively involved in the discussion, and how the discussion process can support the development of critical thinking skills. The results of this observation will be used to provide a more comprehensive picture of the implementation of the group discussion method and its contribution to improving students' critical thinking skills.

By using this research method, it is hoped that a clear picture can be obtained about the effectiveness of using the group discussion method in improving students' critical thinking skills at Sint Private Elementary School. Yoseph Kabanjahe. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide practical recommendations for teachers and schools in implementing learning methods that are more interactive and focus on developing students' critical thinking skills.

## DISCUSSION

This research aims to analyze the effect of the group discussion method on improving students' critical thinking skills. Research data was obtained through pretest and posttest tests

given to the experimental group and control group, as well as through observations and interviews that supported the quantitative results.

Based on the results of measuring critical thinking skills through pretest and posttest, there were significant differences between the experimental group which used the group discussion method and the control group which used conventional learning methods. The average pretest score for the experimental group was 65.75 and increased to 82.40 in the posttest, while in the control group, the average pretest score was 64.85 and only increased to 70.10 in the posttest.

The results of statistical analysis using the t-test show that the p-value is 0.001 ( $< 0.05$ ), which means there is a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group after treatment. This shows that the group discussion method has a significant effect in improving students' critical thinking skills at Sint Private Elementary School. Yoseph Kabanjahe.

Based on the results above, an average increase of 16.65 points in critical thinking skills in the experimental group shows that group discussions have a significant impact on students' ability to think critically. In contrast, the increase that occurred in the control group was only 5.25 points, which shows that conventional methods are less effective in improving critical thinking skills.

The results of observations during the learning process also support quantitative data. In the experimental group, students appeared to be more active in participating in discussions, providing arguments to each other, asking critical questions, and considering various points of view before reaching conclusions. The teacher acts as a facilitator who encourages students to develop their arguments and challenge less profound thinking.

In contrast, in the control group, students were more passive and tended to receive information from the teacher without much discussion. Learning is more one-way, with students rarely asking questions or sharing their views. The results of these observations show that the group discussion method not only encourages active student involvement, but also creates a more dynamic learning atmosphere, where students can practice critical thinking through interaction with group friends.

Interviews with teachers and students provide additional insight into the effectiveness of group discussion methods. Teachers who taught in the experimental group reported that students seemed braver in expressing their opinions and more involved in learning. They also noted that group discussions provide space for students to explore the material in more depth and understand the topic comprehensively. Students who were previously passive became more involved in the discussion process, although there were still challenges in keeping all students actively participating equally.

Students in the experimental group also stated that the group discussion method helped them understand the material better, because they could listen and learn from their friends' points of view. Some students admitted that they felt more confident in expressing their opinions and felt more challenged to think critically during the discussion.

The results of this research indicate that the group discussion method is effective in improving students' critical thinking skills at Sint Private Elementary School (Prayuda & Tarigan, 2024). Yoseph Kabanjahe. The significant increase in the experimental group's posttest results compared to the control group shows that group discussions are able to create a learning environment that encourages students to think more analytically and critically. This finding is in line with previous research which states that group discussions can help students develop critical thinking skills through social interaction and sharing ideas.

Students' active engagement in discussions, as observed during the lesson, provides additional evidence that this method can improve students' ability to evaluate arguments, question assumptions, and organize logical thinking. This is very important because critical thinking skills are one of the main competencies that need to be developed in this information era, where students are faced with a variety of information that must be analyzed critically.

## CONCLUSION

This research aims to analyze the effectiveness of the group discussion method in improving students' critical thinking skills at Sint Private Elementary School. Yoseph Kabanjahe (Asma & Riham, 2023). Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the group discussion method has proven effective in improving students' critical thinking skills compared to conventional learning methods. The experimental group that used the group discussion method showed a significant increase in posttest results, both in terms of analytical skills, evaluation, and the preparation of logical arguments. In addition, the observation results showed that students in the experimental group were more active in the learning process, involved in in-depth social interactions, and were braver in asking questions and expressing opinions.

Group discussions provide a learning environment that supports the development of critical thinking skills, where students collaborate, share ideas, and challenge each other's arguments. This process encourages them to think more analytically, critically, and be open to different points of view, thereby enriching their understanding of the subject matter.

However, this study has limitations related to sample coverage and specific school context, which may affect the generalizability of the results (Rasheed & Kouser, 2024). However, these findings provide important implications for educational practice, namely that the group discussion method can be implemented as an effective strategy for developing students' critical thinking skills, especially in elementary schools.

For further development, future research can expand the scope of the sample, explore other variations of collaborative learning strategies, and overcome the challenges of maintaining active student involvement evenly in group discussions. Thus, this method can be further optimized in various educational contexts.

## REFERENCES

- Annisa, I. A. (2023). The Implementation of Group Discussion Method to Teach Reading Comprehension at MAN 1 Ponorogo. [etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/http://etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/id/eprint/25159](http://etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/http://etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/id/eprint/25159)
- Asma, R. A. S., & Riham, M. (2023). Teaching Strategies to Develop EFL Learners' Abilities to Work in Groups. [dspace.centre-univ-mila.dz/http://dspace.centre-univ-mila.dz/jspui/handle/123456789/2522](http://dspace.centre-univ-mila.dz/dspace.centre-univ-mila.dz/jspui/handle/123456789/2522)
- Ištvan, I. (2022). THE USE OF COOPERATIVE METHODS TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING IN TEACHING PROGRAMMES. EDULEARN22 Proceedings. <https://library.iated.org/view/ISTVAN2022USE>
- Loor, S. D. C., & Illescas, J. N. M. (2024). The importance of Cooperative learning to improve speaking skills in seventh graders research project. [repositorio.upse.edu.ec/handle/46000/11007](https://repositorio.upse.edu.ec/repositorio.upse.edu.ec/handle/46000/11007)
- Prayuda, M. S. (2023). Penyuluhan Bahasa Inggris Dasar Daily Speaking Pada Anak-Anak Di Desa Salaon Toba Kabupaten Samosir. *Welfare: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*. <https://jurnalfebi.iainkediri.ac.id/index.php/Welfare/article/view/574>
- Prayuda, M. S., Gultom, C. R., Purba, N., & ... (2024). FROM AVERSION TO ENGAGEMENT: TRANSFORMING EFL HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS' APPROACH TO ENGLISH IDIOMS THROUGH ROLE-PLAYING. ... Review: Journal of .... <http://journal.uniku.ac.id/index.php/ERJEE/article/view/8869>
- Prayuda, M. S., & Tarigan, K. E. (2024). ROLE PLAYING STRATEGY IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' IDIOMATIC EXPRESSION MASTERY. *Jurnal Darma Agung*. <http://jurnal.darmaagung.ac.id/index.php/jurnaluda/article/view/3980>
- Prayuda, M. S., Tarigan, K. E., & ... (2023). Applying Make a Match Technique to Improve the Seventh-Grade Of Students' Vocabulary Mastery In SMP Dharma Wanita Medan. *Journal of English* .... <https://ejournal.unma.ac.id/index.php/jell/article/view/6505>
- Rasheed, S., & Kouser, D. K. R. T. (2024). Effect of Cooperative and Individualized Learning Strategies on Critical Thinking in Elementary Students. *Remittances Review*. <https://remittancesreview.com/menu-script/index.php/remittances/article/view/1809>

Wannisa, W. (2023). THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION IN TEACHING READING FOR TENTH GRADE OF APHP 1 SMK N KEBONAGUNG IN ACADEMIC YEAR .... repository.stkippacitan.ac.id.  
<https://repository.stkippacitan.ac.id/id/eprint/1427/>