# Teachers' Experiences in Using the A-P-E (Alam-Pagsasabuhay-Epekto) Diagram as a Reflection Tool in World History Classes

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## ABSTRACT

This research examined the development and experiences of World History teachers in using the Alam-Pagsasabuhay-Epekto diagram as a reflective tool in their classes. The development of the tool is drawn from Kolb's Reflective Model (1984), the C3 Framework (2013), Piaget's (1968) constructivist theory, and Watson's (1930) behaviorist theory. The project was action research conducted among Social Studies teachers handling World History classes at Pabago High School. Data collection on the teacher's experiences and perceptions on the reflective tool entailed using a Likert-scaled survey and focus group discussion using semi-structured questions. The project uncovered the teachers' experiences of using reflection to increase reflective practices, leading to learning application using the Alam-Pagsasabuhay-Epekto diagram. The project concluded with recommendations for enhancing learning applications and further studies on the students' use of reflective writing activities in the Social Studies classroom. Future studies could potentially influence teachers' practices inside the classroom and the curriculum planners in designing a more interactive Social Studies program. The outcomes of this project can be utilized to inform teacher training programs of the Department of Education in the area of reflection tools and activities to promote a more active application of World History lessons.

**Key Words:** Alam-Pagsasabuhay-Epekto Diagram, Reflective Tools, Learning Application, Reflective Writing Activity, Social Studies

## INTRODUCTION

The Social Studies teaching methodology is one of the most crucial parts of the teaching and learning process. It varies depending on the topics, types of learners, teacher experiences, and the educational reforms in the classroom. The current teaching techniques primarily focus on the execution of the lesson and should pay more attention to the reflection on the content and learning process. The lack of reflection may make students perceive Social Studies content, particularly History, as tedious and complex (Akengin & Cendek, 2017). Hence, students may find it challenging to relate World History lessons to daily life as it presumably concerns only the past. As such, Social Studies teachers must develop or select appropriate materials to ensure students reach conclusions and formulate relevant reflections leading to their daily learning application. The task includes the teacher's perceptions of and experiences in the use of learning materials as implementers of the curriculum. Therefore, teachers must examine their experiences using the appropriate materials for their students.

Reflection is a process of analyzing an action "by focusing on the process of achieving the outcome. Reflective practice as an inquiry approach to teaching and learning in Social Studies involves the teachers' commitment to aim for continuous learning improvement" (Rogers, 2016, p.10). Experiential learning or reflection on action drives a rigorous Social Studies curriculum. It encourages students to connect their learning to previous knowledge and current issues, develop critical thinking and creativity to form new understandings, and apply it in real-life situations. Curriculum planners may be tasked to design educational reforms. However, teachers' ideas, beliefs, and practices are vital in the classroom's reflective practices

because they are expected to implement reflective activities (Alsalem, 2015; Persson et al., 2018; Rogers, 2016). Therefore, teachers play a huge role in students' reflection and learning application in their Social Studies classes.

Teachers in the Philippines are guided by the 2023 Department of Education's (DepEd) agenda, specifically its advocacy of MATATAG: Batang Makabata, Batang Makabansa. MATATAG includes a curriculum relevant to producing responsible citizens, enhancing educational facilities, promoting students' welfare, and supporting teachers to teach better. Under the MATATAG, the curriculum which is aimed to be relevant to create capable and job-equipped, dynamic, and responsible citizens (DepEd, 2023), the DepEd added the importance of reflection to make the students 'awareness of the current scenario in the country" (DepEd, 2023). Hence, the schools become the catalyst in molding responsible citizens and urge the development of national commitment to sustain a collective effort from the education sector, community, and the government.

The DepEd likewise called the attention of all educators, not only Social Studies teachers, to promote quality reflections in the classes. In Enclosure 3 of the DepEd Region 4A Memo No. 296 (2020), reflections become a part of the authentic teaching and learning process. In the memo, it stipulated the instructional process known as IDEA. IDEA stands for Introduction, Development, Engagement, and Assimilation. The assimilation covers the phase concerning the student's learning and the application. Consistent conduct of reflection is essential to the teaching and learning process because the students will gather ideas and context for refining their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. It is also assumed that improving the students' values will aid in solving attitude problems in schools, like absenteeism, tardiness, laziness, and uncooperativeness in the different school activities (Di Stefano et al., 2023).

To address these attitude problems, including the lack of a reflective tool, this action research project introduced the A-P-E Diagram as a tool for creating reflections by students on the World History learning content and process. This tool promotes and guides students' reflections on their knowledge, aspirations, attitudes, and skills to contribute as future citizens. With this diagram, an inclusive and productive learning process is foreseen to be attainable.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Teachers' Experiences in Using Reflection Tools

According to Richards and Lockhart (1994), cited by Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman (2018), reflective writing can inform teachers of their teaching habits and create a record to review their practices, strengths, and weaknesses. Students can make their reflections through activities and assignments (Whitver & Riesen, 2019). Platt (2016) explained that balancing writing activities with other practice assignments is necessary. Also, prior studies suggested that teachers must write feedback to fill learning gaps in any way possible (Platt et al., 2002; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018).

Herbert (2021) and Scifres (2021) affirmed these findings around social-emotional learning studies. Their studies mentioned that social and emotional learning activities improve self-awareness, self-management, and societal awareness to help with responsible decision-making (Scifres, 2021). Socio-emotional activities encourage students to use more personal, accessible, and informal writing styles to reflect and make conscious decisions. Moreover, these activities improve students' test scores and grades while lessening emotional distress. Still, teachers should take responsibility for their choices and conduct of learning activities (Herbert, 2021; Serure, 2018), including choosing methods for Social Studies classrooms (Fitchett, 2019). Herbert (2021) advised teachers about the possible risk of implementing these activities, such as awkwardness and privacy law violations. Therefore, the teachers must carefully select the most suitable method. For instance, if the activities are a form of reflection, they should also implement these activities to

nurture socio-emotional well-being beyond learning content.

Alsalem (2015) revealed that developing effective curriculum intervention can include student reflective writing, social consciousness, and social engagement. Students have used reflective writing skills in analyzing and evaluating social issues, which helped them engage (Alsalem, 2015). Platt (2016) created Reflective Writing Prompts (RWPs) to address and implement practical methods of instruction and self-regulated learning skills, including structured reflection. Owton (2017) branded reflective journaling activities and assignments as learning methods that changed behavior stimuli. Although her research is grounded in a music setting, both music and writing can express one's emotions and thoughts. These studies support this project because curriculum intervention may include a more passionate use of reflective writing in Social Studies classes to improve behavior and learning application.

Viera (2021) mentioned Thornton's book (1991) about gatekeeping in instructional decision-making. Thornton's words incorporate into Fitchett's study (2019) about Social Studies curricular gatekeepers. The two resources highlighted that teachers shape the students' academic experiences and the distinctive pedagogical methods to execute in class based on their beliefs about the subject matter (Viera, 2021). Moreover, teachers can have reflection logs to reflect on the quality of education catered, their instructional abilities, emotional learning implementation, and sustainability. Therefore, it shows teachers can reflect and adapt to different situations (Pines, 2022).

Teachers know the effect that reflections have on education. As a result, the teachers implement reflective writing to let the students mirror their learning, allowing them to make it personal while expressing their emotions, changing their behavior, and becoming active citizens. Viera's research fortifies these statements despite her study being about Social Studies through the lenses of Visual Arts. Her study attested that personal connections to learning provoke students' interest and foster an understanding of History for profound Social Studies content (Viera, 2021). Similarly, Gay (2002), cited by Viera (2021), mentioned that understanding the sociocultural experiences of students makes teachers apply culturally responsive teaching. Classroom practices are situated in students' life experiences and frames of reference, which can be grounds for authentic instruction implementation (Brown, 2018). One of the activities for this teaching technique is reflection writing because it showcases students' understanding of Social Studies content based on their experiences.

As cited above, Alsalem (2015) also indicated that her research about reflective writing has limits. Her investigation should have asked teachers and planners about the challenges they faced. Therefore, she recommends further studies on integrating critical theories to gain feedback from classroom implementors. Alsalem's (2015) recommendation and Kolb's Reflective Model (1984) under experience construct are the grounds for furthering studies related to reflective writing to help the teachers profile their students and strengthen the learning application.

### Reflective Writing

Scholars mentioned that reflections have various types, but this research will focus only on the function of reflective thinking, such as personal and classroom reflections. As cited by Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman (2018), Richards and Lockhart (1994) defined a reflection journal as a written response to a teaching event that enables students to become responsible for their learning (Lazarus, 2018). Besides, Kim (2013) mentions that the primary goal of reflective writing: is to record one's practice (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). It can also help teachers anticipate the students' future actions, suggesting the most appropriate reinforcement or enhancement of learning practices. On the students' side, reflection influences their learning experience and increases their self-awareness by recalling their classroom experiences (Chang, 2019; Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018; Ali & Lalani, 2020).

Casanave (2013), synthesized by Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman (2018), stated that journal writing could only be reflective if it includes the writer's thoughts, feelings, emotions, interests, and curiosity, leading to awareness of classroom practices. On the other hand, Alsalem (2015) revealed that regular writing class does not allow students to engage and collaborate in solving social issues. As a result, she uses problem-posing and a more organized strategy that helps students arrange their thoughts and link their ideas (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018). Simone Galea (2012) "criticized the attempts to systematize reflective thought under the behaviorist approach." She argued that following a procedural practice will homogenize reflective practice (DeCristofaro, 2016, p. 55), affecting students' reflection and learning. The cited literature and theses mentioned the pros and cons of reflective activities for students learning. Whether following a specific process or letting the students write their thoughts freely depends on the situation, implementer, and the types of learners.

On the contrary, Bagby (2021) exposes the significant connection between self-reflection and emotional intelligence. Chang (2019) alerts education personnel to use reflection techniques properly. Reflection can be too emotional and uncomfortable when misused because participants can respond according to their innermost painful experiences and vulnerabilities using reflective activities (Ali & Lalani, 2020). Furthermore, Building Bulletin 102 mentioned that children, especially those with special needs and disabilities, require approaches that encourage the advancement of language, literary, organization competencies, and practical sensory or physical experiences in formulating abstract ideas. Therefore, regular students and those with special needs require suitable reflection activities (Hawkins et al., n.d.).

Research created by Platt (2016) discussed that journaling aims to make students think reflectively to generate meaning that lets them take control of their learning. Strategies including journaling can build a deeper connection to the campus that increases attention and can help calm students. These prove that social-emotional learning positively impacted students' self-esteem and perceptions of schools. It also allows teachers to understand their students' emotions and helps provide more substantial instruction for social awareness and relationship skills (Scifres, 2021).

On the other hand, Platt (2016) warns teachers about the importance of modeling reflective thinking and writing to benefit the students. She stressed that students would only come up with valuable reflections when using their mother tongue language, the language students are comfortable in and gained credits for completion. Although numerically graded, Cavilla (2017) argues that a helpful reflection should be more structured and stricter in rubrics. It should also be practiced regularly in the learning event to construct the learning outcome (Whitver & Riesen, 2019).

Using a numerically graded journal or not is constantly debated and based on the teachers' preferences and students' needs. Genua (2019) mentioned a significant relationship between graded reflective journals and honesty. Rose et al. (2016) said the same concern about reflection because when instructors ask students to write their thoughts for them to read, students commonly limit their reflective outputs to gain better points. Chang (2019) suggested a non-graded journal activity to resolve that problem and maintain an honest and authentic reflection. With this suggestion, Whitver and Riesen (2019) proposed freewriting to encourage students to write and think without restrictions or attention to grammar.

Whitver and Riesen (2019) discovered that reflections allow students to establish their theory, explore past experiences, and connect them to present learning. Similarly, Colley et al. (2012) revealed that reflection is a crucial educational strategy for motivation, lifelong learning, and metacognitive growth. However, they warned the implementors to examine whether their implementation is correct or not or linked to assessment (cited in Cavila, 2016). The instructional method, like reflective writing, includes progressivism concepts. These advantages are student-centered learning that causes reflective thinking and promotes studying contemporary issues. Disadvantages are (1) it can be time-consuming, (2) high-stake assessment, and (3)

student learning challenges in critical analysis. These also apply to reflective writing (Serure, 2018).

As mentioned earlier, the articles and pieces of research reported that the execution of reflective activities was according to the teachers' discretion, objective, and learning outcome alignment (Whitver & Riesen, 2019). However, they all argued that it is better to gain incentive from journal writing, even if not for an actual grade or points. The studies indicated that reflections also considered the importance of honesty and authenticity.

Reflection was also linked with the purpose of looking back to avoid repeating mistakes (Helyer, 2015). Taczak and Robertson (2016) suggested reflective assignments and activities as looking inward at the current situations while also looking forward to using "knowledge in a new way and looking outward to connect an identity to a broader context" (Whitver & Riesen, 2019 p. 274). All these pieces of literature and studies, including Kolb's Reflective Model under the reflection phase to the application phase, are grounds for furthering studies and examining the relationship between reflective writing to strengthen the learner's application (Chang, 2019; Fernández-Peña et al., 2016).

### Learning Applications

Reflective writing constructs ideas to make learning personalized, as introduced by constructivist theory as indicated by Yuan et al. (2018) and Abuzandah (2020). Whitver and Riesen (2019) implied that reflection as a part of the learning process allows students to respond to learning surveys at the end of instruction. They also argue that reflective writing is one of the most valuable qualitative learning assessments that enable students' philosophical positionality and construct more critical views (Brown, 2018). Therefore, a positive mindset and openness are necessary for growth and change brought by application and experiences, as Dweck (2008) mentioned (Brisini, 2018).

Creating more critical views on mastery of the content is the potential intersection of reflection and various disciplines (Persson et al., 2018). Whitver and Riesen (2019) stressed that reflective pedagogy facilitates deep and active learning. At the same time, they advise treating content for valuable and practical reflection, such as students' knowledge in creating a review, scaffolded course content, and the interdisciplinary nature of reflective pedagogy. These statements concluded the findings of Myers (2001), which showed that reflection helps students become aware of their learning style, improve their writing skills, and discover consciousness (cited in Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2018).

Since application and mastery of the content are related, it is easier to apply lessons that students learn when thoroughly mastered. Likewise, it is easier to master the study if students know its applicability. It can transform their historical understanding and abstract knowledge into realistic scenarios, showcasing the interconnection of academic lessons in daily life (Abuzandah, 2020). This finding, as Grossman (2009) supports, explains that course concept reflection is necessary for learning application (Whitver & Riesen, 2019).

Whitver and Riesen (2019) also connect assessment to reflection. They discussed three student assessment themes related to reflection and application linkages. These are "(1) reflection provides a way for students to feel connected, (2) the assessment connects theoretical concepts and applications, and (3) it presents new learning approaches" (p. 272). Therefore, reflection can also be a type of assessment: a graded one or not (Cavilla, 2017; Genua, 2019).

The studies above and the literature discussed the importance of reflections in learning and incorporating constructivist theory. These emphasized the association between learning application and reflective thinking. The gap between these pieces of literature and studies is the extent of the relationship between teachers' meditative writing implementation and learning application. Therefore, the teacher-researcher in this project intends to understand the experiences of World History teachers in using reflective essays and

their connection to students' learning applications through the development and use of an actual tool. The succeeding sections discuss the theories that became the basis of the reflective tool and the conceptual framework that guided this project.

### Theoretical Framework

**The C3 framework.** Teaching Social Studies aims to expand the youth's knowledge, allowing them to make critical decisions to be excellent and democratic citizens (Stanley, 2017; Fitchett, 2019). Hence, the study employed the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies' second dimension to guide the application of disciplinary concepts and tools. The C3 framework (2013) falls under History with the application of the inquiry arc. The framework helps students "develop their capacity to know, analyze, explain and argue about interdisciplinary challenges in the social world" while communicating conclusions, informed actions for independent civic engagement, and solving significant problems (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 6, 59; Fitchett, 2019) making learning authentic (Brown, 2018). A study on students' opinions in Social Studies implied that teachers must use more constructivist methods to promote active learning application and achieve independent civic engagement. The same investigation led to this research about reflective writing activities in the lesson and applied C3 as its framework (Akengin & Cendek, 2017).

**Constructivism.** Education aims to get the students ready to become active members of society. Teachers should give them opportunities (Lazarus, 2018) to experience constructivist instructions (Pines, 2022). Constructivist pedagogy or learning by making a curriculum teaching approach stimulates curiosity and allows students to actively share their insights based on prior knowledge and learn with the class (Brown, 2018). Students assembling concepts produce interaction and practical context (Yuan et al., 2018; Abuzandah, 2020). It leads to opportunities for building personalized learning and increases the chances of knowledge application to their daily lives. Internalization of knowledge affects cognition and articulation of what and how students learn (Brown, 2018; Rose et al., 2016). Therefore, teachers learned to value deep reflections (Pines, 2022) to help students construct learning, develop connections, and achieve higher-order thinking skills (Brown, 2018).

**Kolb's reflective model.** David Kolb (1984) and David Schön (1987) narrated the importance of reflection enhancing emotional intelligence (Bagby, 2021), transforming concepts from concrete to abstract (Pines, 2022), and differentiating between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The students will reflect on their learning experiences and background during reflective activities and conceptualize and possibly apply their learning. Therefore, reflection practices are needed to help students improve the extent of their knowledge (Fernández-Peña et al., 2016), which is probably observable by the teachers.

As evident above, reflection is a process of analyzing an action by focusing on achieving the outcome. Reflection as a "practice in an inquiry approach to teaching and learning involves the teachers' commitment to aim for continuous learning improvement" (Rogers, 2016, p.10). Experiential learning or reflection on action drives a rigorous Social Studies curriculum. It encourages students to connect their learning to previous knowledge and current issues, develop critical thinking and creativity to form new understandings, and apply it in real-life situations. This project assumed that the teachers' experiences and perceptions on the use of reflective tools are vital in implementing and improving reflective practices, which in turn may influence the students' learning application of World History lessons. The next chapter further describes the design of this project.

## METHODOLOGY

This project utilized an action research approach to understand the teachers' experiences and perception of

student reflections which occurred in a natural setting, that is, in a World History classroom where the teacher-researcher and fellow teachers routinely implement the use of reflection tools. The teacher-researcher became familiar with reflective writing tools through Learning Action Cell sessions, in-service training, and actual practice. Still, because of her limited experiences in using the reflection tools, she was keen to further understand the experiences of other teachers in using reflections in their classes. As such, action research is deemed the best-fit methodology for this project. McKernan (1987) stated that "action research is a form of self-reflective problem solving which enables practitioners to understand better and solve pressing problems" (p. 6) and make practical decisions and improve their performance. In line with this, May (1993) connected it to a classroom setting. She mentioned that the "view of teachers" should be that of researchers shedding light and understanding of teaching methods and strategies. Furthermore, she highlighted that action research could be a reflective teaching form of orientation (May,1993). Therefore, action research is suited to the project since it is likewise grounded on teachers' reflective practices as they apply the A-P-E Diagram in their classes, where students are expected to reflect on their learning content and learning process within their Social Studies classroom.

## 3.1 Project Setting and Participants

The project was undertaken in the teachers' classroom setting, a World History class at Pabago High School. The action research used purposive sampling to collect data among Grade 8 Social Studies teachers in Pabago High School since they are the most accessible respondents suited for the project. The teachers were purposely selected because they are World History teachers, in classes where some students look forward to the history subject as more interesting and relatable (Akengin & Cendek, 2017). Hence, the intent to include only the teachers handling World History as the project participants are foreseen to have a practical application that would benefit the teachers and students alike. After all, the action research entailed the use of the APE diagram as a reflection tool to determine the depth of students' understanding of World History lessons based on their teacher's perceptions and experiences.

In Pabago High School, nine teachers, excluding the teacher-researcher, handled World History. One teacher is too busy to join the project, so the respondents are only eight. Below is a summary of the participant profile in this action research project. To further understand the table, the teacher-researcher created a table that shows the teacher's profiles in areas such as sex, age, and the teacher respondents' teaching years, and their educational backgrounds are aligned with teaching Social Studies.

Table 3.1. Profiles of Grade 8 Social Studies Teachers

| Participant's Name/Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Educational Background | Subject Taught | Number of years in teaching Social Studies |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Angel** | M | 31 | BSEd Social Science | Social Studies 8/World History | 10 |
| **Nhyl** | F | 54 | MA Educational Management<br><br>BSEd History | Social Studies 8 (World History) | 9 |
| **Jen** | F | 45 | MA Social Science | Social Studies 8 (World History) | 20+ |
| **Loi** | F | 43 | BSEd History | Social Studies 8 (World History) | 23 |

| Mary | F | 33 | BSEd Social Science | Social Studies 8 (World History) | 8 |
|------|---|----|--------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Mil | F | 33 | MA Social Studies | Social Studies 8 (World History) | 10 |
| Rai | F | 29 | MA Social Science | Social Studies 8 (World History) | 9 |
| Tin | F | 29 | MA Social Science | Social Studies 8 (World History) | 5 |

The data above showed that 87.5% or seven respondents are all females, and only 12.5% or one respondent is male. All of them are majoring in History, Studies, and Social Science. Hence, they have legitimate qualifications for teaching World History. The median age of the participants is 31.5 from the ages 29, 29, 31, 33, 33, 43, 45, and 54, whereas their years of teaching Social Studies are approximately 12 years on average from their responses 5, 8, 9, 9, 10, 10, 23, and 20+. According to Dewey's (1934) theory of experience, years of teaching can strengthen teachers' capabilities, beliefs, and strategies. Teachers achieve this through constant interaction and by making new interpretations based on their meaning-making process (Schmidt, 2010). These improvements include their reflective techniques and creativity. Therefore, this project can rely on teachers' comments and experiences about the reflective activity to further improve the A-P-E Diagram tool.

### Data Collection and Procedure

**Focus group discussion.** Data were collected using semi-structured questions in a focus group discussion (FGD). FGDs are one direct way of gaining participants' knowledge, beliefs, feelings, andexperiences through questions. In an FGD, some respondents may show unwillingness to share information (van Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017). However, some participants may want to share by stating their thoughts. As such, data may still be collected in this situation. In this project, the questions focus on reflection tools used by Grade 8 Social Studies teachers, their experience using the A-P-E diagram as reflective activity, and their perceptions about the possibility of seeing learning applications using the reflection, especially the A-P-E diagram. During the FGDs, some chose to jot down their answers because they were a bit shy, but some freely engaged and expressed their responses verbally.

**Survey.** The researcher requested that the Grade 8 Social Studies teachers fill out a short Likert-scale survey, which included items about their profile, teaching philosophy, and relevant background to theproject. This information will help the researcher understand the participants and justify the two groups formed from them. The two groups are made based on age and length of teaching World History. Earlier,the study noted that there were supposed to be nine respondents in the study, but only eight returned the survey. Hence, the researcher only conducted the FGD with the total number of participants who returnedthe survey.

**Procedure.** The teacher-researcher developed the data collection instruments in consultation with her faculty-in-charge and, thereafter, another expert, which is the school Head or Principal. Items were reviewed accordingly to correspond with the action research objectives and the lesson intent for implementing the reflection activities. The instruments were also submitted to the High School's principal for comment/ feedback and in accordance with guidelines for conducting data collection in the school. As a Social Studies major, the school principal had years of teaching experience and a background in curriculum development. The teacher-researcher was assured of their expertise and qualification in reviewing and providing feedback on the data collection instruments and procedure. After the project plan was approved, a letter addressed to the High School principal was submitted to request permission to conduct the project in the school, which

involved eight Grade 8 Social Studies teachers as the respondents. Informed consent from the respondents was also secured, after which the teacher-researcher distributed and retrieved the data collection instruments individually; then, the FGD followed accordingly. The data collection was completed within three weeks and during the second quarter of the school year.

**Ethical Considerations for the Project.** The teacher-researcher sought all the participants' approvaland consent as well as from the school head. The project also relied on the voluntary participation of World History teachers through their informed consent forms. Data was kept confidential throughout the data collection and analysis phase. For example, aliases were utilized for narrating the outcomes. The name of the school was also pseudonymized.

# IMPLEMENTATION

## Phase 1: The Development of the A-P-E Diagram as a Reflective Tool

The Department of Education called the attention of all educators, not only Social Studies teachers, to promote quality reflections in the classes. In Enclosure 3 of the DepEd Region 4A Memo No. 296 s.2020, reflections become a part of the authentic teaching and learning process. The idea of the A-P-E diagram came from the teacher-researchers classroom reflective writing strategy. The diagram answers these guide questions: i) Ano ang iyong natutuhan? (What have you learned?), ii) Paano mo ito maisasabuhay? (How will you apply it in your daily life?) and iii) Ano ang epekto ng kaalamang ito sa iyo? (What is the effect of this knowledge on you?). Each question will delve into the students' feelings and examine their possible ways of lesson application. Constructivism theory, Kolb's Reflective model, and C3 Framework are incorporated into the process.



Figure 4.1. The A-P-E Diagram

## Phase 2: Presentation of Project Results and Discussion

### Teachers' Experiences in the Use of the A-P-E Diagram as a Reflection Tool

Among the eight Grade 8 Social Studies teachers who completed the survey, there is a general agreement about using reflection to find out their students' real-life application of World History lessons. The teacher-participants sensed the effort of parents and guardians through the comments they provided. Furthermore, all Grade 8 Social Studies teachers indicated the reflective activity to determine students' application of World History lessons. The teachers affirmed their students' enjoyment of accomplishing the reflective activities in their World History classes.

Data from the FGD supports these survey results. For example, Teacher Jen clarified that she uses reflection in World History classes to localize World History lessons for more accessible application in real-life situations. She said, "The tool is good…it can be a way for students to easily understand the lessons, leading them to reflect on its application in their lives". Teacher Angel also stated, "The A-P-E Diagram is very helpful to my students. I will use it at every end of the discussions." This means that the A-P-E Diagram is practical and user-friendly in World History classes while also ensuring that teachers can see how students will apply their learning.

These statements on the outcomes of using the A-P-E diagram are affirmed by Kolb's (1984) reflective model, which mentions that reflection practices improve the extent of knowledge of students (Fernandez-Peña et al., 2016). However, choosing the appropriate reflection tools and when to utilize them falls on the remit of the teachers. Thus, reflective activities must be carefully planned and implemented in Social Studies classes if the subject aims to target the real-life application of World History lessons. The grade eight Social Studies teachers were also asked: *What is your best experience in utilizing the A-P-E Diagram for reflection practices of your students?* Teacher Jen and Teacher Angel mentioned that the A-P-E tool helped them further examine their students' learning. Teacher Jen explained, "The tool helped generate many ideas from the students. It shows that students understand the lessons." Teacher Angel asserted: "I can truly sense and read that they (students) reflect on what they learned in the A-P-E diagram. I think it is a practical tool to use in our Social Studies classes". The other participants also mentioned the specific learning areas/skills covered by reflection, such as comprehension, application, and analysis. Teacher Loi stated, "You can really tell who among your students fully grasped the lesson."

In the C3 Framework (2013), "applying the disciplinary concepts is essential for developing the capacity of students to know, analyze, explain, and argue" (NCCS, 2013, p. 6, 59). All these areas are included in the A-P-E Diagram. Therefore, this project revealed that the diagram, which drew ideas from the framework, can tap into essential skills in Social Studies. The teachers in this action research project affirmed this.

### Teachers' Perceptions of Using Reflection to Examine Students' Learning Application

The eight Grade 8 Social Studies teachers strongly agree that reflective writing activities effectively assess students learning. They also agreed that the A-P-E Diagram is an excellent way to determine whether students need enrichment or reinforcement. Teachers Tin, Rai, Mil, and Jen describe reflection as an effective, useful, applicable, efficient, helpful, easy, meaningful, notable, and open-minded way of learning application. The Grade 8 teachers in Social Studies were asked about their beliefs in reflective writing tools like A-P-E Diagram to influence their students' learning application.

Focus discussion groups A and B confirmed that reflective writing tools could influence students' learning application ability. Teacher Jen, in focus discussion group A, commented, "…they cannot create reflection when they are not experiencing it." She believes that reflection can be effectively undertaken if students do not have opportunities to widen their learning experiences. It should be experienced or a known lesson. The Group B participants also mentioned the same in their comments during the FGD when asked, do you believe writing reflections will influence your students' application ability? Why? In what ways? They also approve of this comment during the discussion. They also expressed concerns about the time spent conducting the reflective activities and whether they would grade them. They all agree that these areas are at the individual's discretion and based on their students.

### Teachers' Views on the relationship between Learning Applications and Reflection

Among the eight Grade 8 Social Studies teachers, most of them agree and strongly agree that (1) A-P-E Diagram can facilitate reflective thinking, (2) able to connect ideas and synthesize information, (3) helpful

in constructing new ideas, and real-life examples, and (4) measure a variety of knowledge and skills application. However, various responses are made regarding the difficulty of ascertaining student learning applications.

In the FGD, Teacher Jen, a Social Studies teacher for more than 20 years, had the chance to explain her answer in the survey. She further elaborates, "I can understand a student's personality in writing reflection. Just like their environment." Her statement means that external factors, like environment and students' personality, affect the learning application, but still, she admits that there is a relationship between reflection and learning application.

Her statements were fortified by John Watson's (1930) behaviorism theory which stated that learning is a change in behavior and the evidence that children learn through their behavioral improvement (Rilling, 2000, p. 275). Hence, teachers will know if the students learn and use their learning through their test scores, reflections, and actions.

> **Is there any significant relationship between using the A-P-E diagram and learning application based on the teacher's perspectives and experiences in implementing the A-P-E diagram?** Both focus group discussions, A and B, confirmed the relationships between reflection and  learning application. Teacher Jen narrated her experiences to group A. She explained that "During the pandemic and even today [S.Y. 2022-2023], we implemented Project SIBOL (Seed/Sprout in Benefits of Life, another  project proposed by Ms. Rich-Anne about environmental conservation during the first grading period) after tackling the geography. Parents are glad because their children learned to be creative and plant (seeds/sprouts), andthe parents' feedback is positive. They are thankful and hoping that the project becomes continuous."

Although both groups agreed about the significance of using the A-P-E Reflection tool in class, Teacher Angel expressed his concern. He mentioned that "some students are having difficulty writing  their reflections in lower sections." Teacher Nhyl agreed and explained that "it is due to the students' attitudes, their speed of writing, and unable to think critically." As this discussion in the chapter suggests, Grade 8 Social Studies teachers shall incorporate the A-P-E tool in the reflection phase of the lesson as a good practice in enhancing students learning application, either in cognitive, affective, or psychomotor form. Still, teachers' and parents'/guardians' assistance are necessary to accomplish the activity and gain a fruitful reflection.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Chapters 1 and 2 of this study introduced and discussed the theoretical basis for the Alam-Pagsasabuhay-Epekto (A-P-E) Diagram as a reflection tool in improving learning applications and the models and theories supporting it. The conceptual framework devised in the project assumed that the tool could be used as a reflective activity and for checking the learning application of students in terms of critical thinking and creativity to form new ideas applicable to daily life. Chapter 3 discussed the action research project and the context of the participants where the A-P-E diagram was developed and utilized.

Chapter 4 revealed that the participant's responses to the survey questionnaires and focus group discussions showed that the Social Studies teachers of Grade 8 have positive experiences and beliefs about using reflective writing tools like the Alam-Pagsasabuhay-Epekto (A-P-E) Diagram. Their experiences and beliefs covered the usage of reflection to find out students' real-life application, to feel the support and gain feedback from their parents and guardians, and to help students enjoy reflective writing activities in Social Studies. These elements are necessary to ensure a healthy, guided reflection improving learning application.

The respondents best describe utilizing the diagram as a reflection of learning with the characteristics: effective, useful, applicable, efficient, helpful, easy, meaningful, notable, and open-minded way of the

learning application. There is also a positive consensus among the Grade 8 Social Studies teachers about the influence of the A-P-E Diagram on students' learning applications. The respondents claimed that reflections are impossible to make unless students conceptualize and gain a complete understanding and experiential learning.

Grade 8 Social Studies teachers affirm that the A-P-E diagram can facilitate reflective thinking, connect ideas, synthesize information, construct new ideas and real-life examples, and measure various knowledge and skills like critical thinking and creativity. The research discovered a significant relationship between the A-P-E Diagram and learning application based on the perspectives and experiences of teachers who implemented the diagram in their Social Studies classes. However, there are differences in outlook on reflection in other elements like time consumption and extent of the ascertaining learning application.

The A-P-E Diagram can help students in doing their reflections. Viewing the students' experiences, beliefs, and backgrounds are also possible with the diagram. Although it is hard to view the extent of learning application via A-P-E Diagram, it helps teachers gain valuable feedback from students and parents, guide them on when to adjust instruction and know which students need assistance and enhancement activities. The diagram also strengthened the connection between schools, families, and stakeholders. This way, the students feel the connection of their learning to their community, which helps them to gain awareness, build their own identity, and feel encouraged through the written comments of their parents and guardians.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are drawn based on the results and discussion:

1. This study suggested using reflective writing tools like the A-P-E Diagram in Social Studies classes but with the proper guidance from the teachers and parents. The reflective writing tool may be observed while the students are doing the reflections in their classes so that there will be a dedicated time for students to share their reflections.
2. It is recommended that teachers review the set of students they are handling to see if they can properly and comfortably do reflections in written form. In case of difficulties, other suitable guides may be used to help them come up with good reflections on their learning.
3. The students should be encouraged to seek assistance from their parents or guardians to develop fruitful reflections during the early part of the school year. Eventually, students will be able to undertake their meaningful reflections more independently.
4. Other studies on the use of the A-P-E diagram may be conducted through the perspectives and views of the students so that their feelings, opinions, and actions may be studied to inform how else we can improve the practice of reflection in Social Studies classes.
5. Another study on the use of the A-P-E diagram may be undertaken from the parents' views to ascertain the authenticity of the student's reflections and learning application.
6. Further studies on reflective writing and learning application may be conducted with other variables for consideration.

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**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN SOCIAL SCIENCE (IJRISS)**

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS |Volume VII Issue VII July 2023

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