

ECDE7015: Session 2

Critical Analysis

Critical analysis - an appraisal based on careful analytical evaluation
critical appraisal, assessment - a serious examination and judgment of something;

It includes an analysis of texts, explore viewpoints, or assumptions made, respond to social issues

How to develop criticality

Developing criticality involves analysis of texts, exploration of author viewpoints, assumptions made, and responses to social issues and how they are represented in texts.

Texts to engage with written texts, visual texts, such as books, magazines, blogs, websites, etc

How to start the process

Critical reading

1. Gather information

Gather as much information as possible about the issue/research.

2. Develop logic

Identify the purpose

Consult a dictionary to understand material that is unfamiliar to you

Identify key elements/main ideas of the text as you read

How? It involves asking critical questions and writing a summary of the work.

3. Critical questions

Simple questions: Who? When? Where?

Complex questions: What? How? Why?

4. Writing the summary

Present your ideas by reporting, interpreting and critiquing.

- a. **Reporting** -describing the issue/research before proceeding to a critical engagement
(e.g. Abbiss (2022) maintains that..... whereas Mahon (2019) found that)

b. Interpreting and/or evaluating -shifting your writing from the descriptive to the critical by highlighting the importance of the ideas you are reading. **It also shows your voice.** For example:

- This is important because
- This gives the impression/means that
- This is worth noting because it
- which suggests the need for
- which shows/illustrates that

c. Critiquing – evaluate the text or the research (form an opinion) by looking for the:

Positive (strengths-based), and/or

Negative (limitations-based), and/or

Solutions (action/recommendation-based)

How to show your voice (a personal voice allows to create a deeper meaning/nuanced understanding to the issue)

Personal voice

- How do I feel about this situation or social issue? Do I think that the assumptions made are fair? What makes me feel that way?
- What viewpoints or values do I hold that are similar or different to the author? How did I develop this viewpoint or set of values relating to this social issue?
- What do I think about the way the ideas are presented, or the alternatives that are suggested? What would I say to respond to this argument? What might I do to address the situation (individually, or together with others)?

Source: Abbiss, J. (2016).

Approaches to Critical Writing

Approach 1: Use critical questions to engage with texts/research

Simple questions: **Who? Where? When?**

These questions provide background information to help your readers understand the nature of the work under analysis.

Who?

- Who has written/said it?
- Whose opinion is reported? (an individual or on behalf of?)
- Whose interests is the author serving?
- Is the author an expert?
- What position or viewpoint does the author take? Can you identify bias?
- Whose views are considered or not considered?

Where?

- Where did you find the text/research?
- Is it a journal article or a book/book chapter?

When?

- When was it said/written/published?
- Is it recent and relevant?
- Is the timing significant?

Complex questions: **What? How? Why?**

What?

Describe the key message, challenge, or the puzzle

- What is the nature of the message, challenge, or the puzzle? (Main point(s) or argument(s) being addressed?)
- What learning pedagogies, processes, or strategies (if any) do the author(s) support?
- What conclusions are drawn about the situation or the people?
- What experiences or observations highlighted in this message, challenge, or the puzzle are particularly clear to you?
- How does it compare to your own?

Hint: Give examples from your own work experience, discussions with teachers and colleagues, particular interactions with students, and/or anything that you read in a magazine or other form of media that got you thinking. You may focus on one or a few experiences or observations that have helped you identify the challenge.

How?

Making sense of what is happening

- What is the author's (or authors') point of view? Or what values or assumptions do the author(s) appear to hold? Ideas about what is desirable/undesirable, for example.
- What evidence supports the argument?
- What conclusions did the author(s) attain?
- How does what you feel, see, or experience relate directly to the literature [including curriculum documents and academic literature]? How does literature help (or not help) to explain this situation? (Is the author(s) credible source on evidence?)

Providing new interpretations or understandings

- How does the information or argument differ from other articles on the subject that you have read?
- What values, assumptions, or points of view do you hold that influence your interpretation of the message, challenge, or puzzle? How has my experience and/or the literature challenged these assumptions and understandings?
- What have you learned about this message, challenge, or puzzle that you will apply to your practise?

Hint: Provide references to curriculum support materials, teacher journal articles, research journal articles, and/or books or chapters in academic texts

Why?

Implications for practice

- What does the author want you to know?
- Target audience?
- Is the **message, challenge, or the puzzle** a priority?
- What are possibilities for action to help address this **message, challenge, or the puzzle**?
- How will you use your new understanding to inform your practice?

Hint: Offering a response -make clear links to practice and possibilities, identify particular strategies that you might use

Approach 2: A layered approach

Present your ideas by reporting, interpreting and critiquing.

Example 1

Much of the research into the experiences of student teachers has investigated how they use mobile devices to support learning during coursework, but not during teaching practice (e.g. Liu, 2016; Naylor & Gibbs, 2018; O'Bannon & Thomas, 2015; Tolosa, 2017). ... As a consequence, Baran et al. (2019) recommended more research to examine “teacher educators’ use of strategies, challenges, and exemplary practices that connect teacher education courses with field practices” (p. 368). Therefore, by exploring how student teachers use mobile technologies during their coursework and teaching practice, this study aims to respond to the recommendation of Baran et al. (2019).

Legend: Reporting (what the authors found), Critique (negative limitation from you), Solution (from another author, with a recommendation), Interpreting and/or evaluating (your voice/personal voice)

Example 2 (focusing on the critique)

The increasing relevance of mobile technologies for teacher preparation is therefore not only due to the rapid advancement of mobile learning in schools, as indicated by Burden and Kearney (2017), but more so the mobility of student teachers who can learn in different contexts (see for example, Adoniou, 2013) and, at different times of the day, whenever and wherever they have access to the internet. ... With that in mind, there is a need to consider the learning contexts in which student teachers find themselves when preparing to become the next generation of teachers; contexts which also extend beyond the physical environments.

Legend: Reporting (what the authors found), a constructive suggestion, Elaboration of the critique (using an example from another author), Further evaluation (from you), Solution (from you, with a recommendation)

Language and Phrases to Use

Examples of the language and phrases you can use in your critical writing.

Positive critique – strengths

- The author suggested the notion of ‘dissident citizenship’ to describe
- This was significant because it

Negative critique – limitations

- Although this concept of transfer has a long tradition in cognitive theory (Diamond, 2019), Hager and Hodkinson (2009) have critiqued the use of the concept transfer because they believe it is an unsatisfactory way of understanding learning.
- The study fails to take into account that transfer is a metaphor and that

Similarity /differences

- Mac Mahon et al. (2016) reported that student teachers ... Like Pegrum et al. (2013), this study revealed that student teachers also Similarly, Vaughan and Lawrence (2013) found that both student teachers and teacher educators.....
- Kay (2006) recommended that ... However, Tondeur et al. (2018) argued that few research

Constructive suggestions

- “There are competing notions of citizenship and the “good” citizen (see, for example, Kymlicka & Norman, 2000; Roholt, Hildreth & Baizerman, 2007; Wood, 2012)”
- The findings may have been more applicable if data was collected