UNIVERSITY of BRADFORD

Faculty of Management & Law

What Is Critical Analysis?

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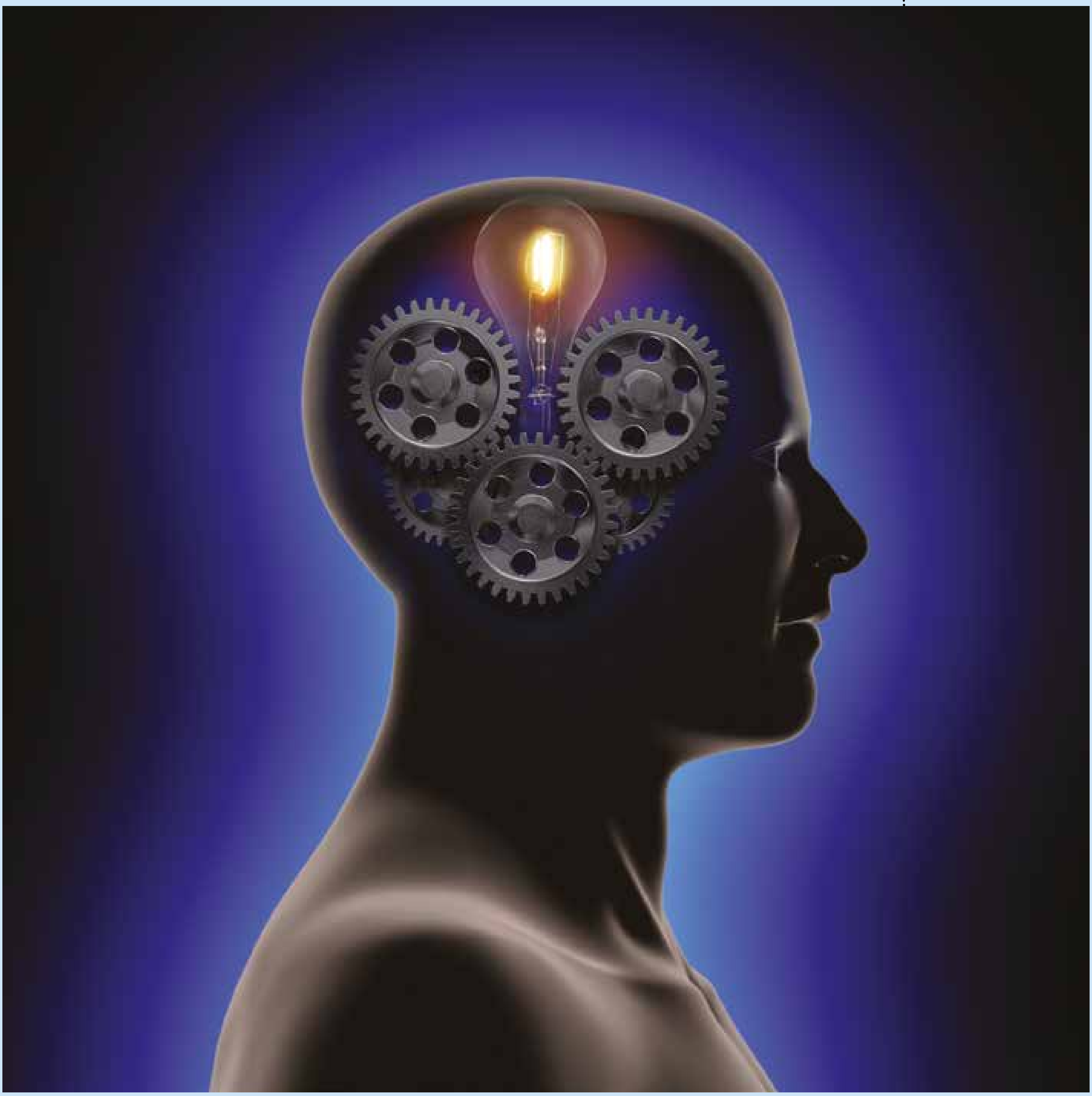


WHAT IS CRITICAL ANALYSIS ?

In the social sciences such as business and management, there is usually no single right answer to an assignment question. These tend to involve many ‘grey areas’ rather than simple, ‘black and white’ distinctions.

A spectrum of different possible interpretations to any topic emerges from the evolving debates in that subject area because academics are continuously extending, qualifying and challenging the ideas of others. Critical analysis involves you in exploring these many shades of grey across that debate by comparing and contrasting the range of different views on your assignment topic.

This can conflict with students’ initial expectations of how they should develop essay arguments. You might assume that these are best derived from what you have learned in class, perhaps some direct business experience or simply your own opinions. However, in practical terms, management tutors will expect to see most of your writing composed of paraphrased interpretations of others’ ideas and research. This means plenty of citations to external sources throughout the paragraphs in your essay.

Critical analysis demonstrates your ability to not just accept any ideas 'at face value'. The tutor expects you to question everything that you hear and read in your studies. So, what exactly are tutors looking for in your assignments?

Tutor's expectations in assignments

First, the tutor will expect you to **focus directly on the specific question** – not to write all that you think you know about the subject generally. It is very important to **analyse the assignment title carefully** to ensure you know exactly what is expected of you. This involves identifying the key variables and relationships specified in the question. Let's consider an example:

ANALYSING THE ASSIGNMENT QUESTION

Evaluate the impact of the Internet on practices for recruitment and selection employed by firms.

- The key words are 'evaluate', 'impact', 'recruitment', 'selection' and 'firms'. The question asks you particularly to **evaluate** (which means to assess the importance of something) the **impact** (a significant effect) of the Internet on both **recruitment and selection** practices.
- You need to look for evidence of the **impact**, both negative and positive, on both these aspects of human resource management in firms. The term **'firms**' is plural, meaning you need to look at more than one, and this suggests an opportunity to evaluate the impact on different types and sizes of firms, exploring any variation between these.
- In such a question, the tutor will look for evidence in your essay that you can objectively present a range of arguments around the impact of the internet on both recruitment **and** selection practices. So, you also need to establish how these are distinct from one another.

Once you have identified the main requirements of the essay, you can then plan an appropriate structure to address these. This involves two levels of engagement with the topic: descriptive and analytical.

What is descriptive writing ?

Essays and reports are likely to require some initial, descriptive writing. This aims to show the reader that you understand the main theories and business practices in this area. In other words, you need to write an early section of the assignment explaining **what** a particular theory claims on this topic, and perhaps **what** is happening in some examples of related business practice.

This might involve presenting diagrams of models, or bullet points of dimensions of a framework, with a short, accompanying explanation of what the author is proposing with this theory. In the case of a real-life example, this is likely to be a short summary of current practice, perhaps highlighting a business problem or opportunity.

Most importantly, this **descriptive writing must be kept to a minimum**. Unless clearly specified otherwise by the tutor, the majority of your academic writing in any management and law assignments must be analytical.

So what is analytical writing then ?

Whereas description involves answering 'what ?' questions, analytical writing requires you to address **'how ?'** and **'why ?'** questions. In other words, the ways in which theories attempt to explain real life, and the reasons for their authors' beliefs in these explanations. This involves investigating topics more deeply – going beneath the surface descriptions of management theory to explore how and why these ideas may be useful or not in the corporate world.

You need to compare and contrast different researchers' views, finding which seem best supported, but also considering counter-arguments and 'exceptions to the rule'. By reviewing the relevant academic literature in this way, you may well then reach a conclusion that you find most convincing within this debate. You must justify this position in your assignment in objective way, i.e. based on a sound analysis of a range of authors' research findings that you have discovered and presented in your essay, **not** your own existing opinions on the topic.

Effective use of sources to support your argument

The above introduction to critical analysis should have helped you realise that your management and law tutors expect to find plenty of evidence of selective and relevant reading on their question topic. This means you need a wide range of reliable sources that support the points made by you in the assignment.

The most common sources of research for business and management subjects are textbooks, academic journal articles, market reports and Government publications. For legal sources, these could be cases from Law Reports, Acts of Parliament, statutory instruments and European Community legislation.

Accurate and appropriate referencing is also therefore a further key indicator for the tutor that you have researched and applied evidence in your argument. **See the ELS 'Why, When and How to Reference' booklet for further details.**

As a business and management student, you might assume that your tutors all agree on what critical analysis means in the academic context. In 2016, ELS conducted a small survey of tutors at the Faculty of Management and Law, asking them what constituted 'critical analysis' in their students' assignments. They were required to rank the list of 11 possible criteria below in order of importance.

1	Questioning what you read and hear.
2	Summarising others' ideas.
3	Expressing your own opinion.
4	Challenging other's views on a topic
5	Explaining what happened in a business/real world situation.
6	Rewriting others' ideas in your own words.
7	Comparing and contrasting others' ideas.
8	Applying theories to business situations.
9	Developing strategic recommendations.
10	Offering solutions for business problems.
11	Exploring the debate around a topic

What of these factors would you guess tutors ranked most highly ?
Write your own list below, in order of importance …

1. 2. 3. 4.

Unsurprisingly, no two tutors answered in quite the same way. Yet a consensus did emerge on the important aspects of critical analysis for students' assignments, as shown on the next page (Sedgley 2016):

KEY PRINCIPLES OF CRITICAL ANALYSIS

1. **Questioning what you read and hear.**
2. **Exploring the debate around a topic.**
3. **Synthesising (comparing and contrasting) different authors' views on the same topic.**
4. **Challenging other's views on that topic.**

Let's look more closely into the four fundamental principles of critical analysis, as identified by the Faculty of Management and Law tutors:

PRINCIPLE 1
QUESTIONING WHAT YOU READ AND HEAR

Tutors are advocating that you should not simply accept others' ideas at 'face value' without first carefully examining these from several different angles. It can be easy to believe what you read in academic texts because the authors are considered authorities in their fields. However, this is a passive way of reading. **You actually need to research more actively by interrogating these texts with a series of challenging questions.** Two frameworks of such questions are provided on pages 13-16 to help you do that.

The main way for you to interrogate any author's claims is by relating these to other authors' arguments on the same topic. This allows you to 'step back' from any one text and consider the wider debate more objectively.

You do not need to rely only on your own judgement in questioning the work of experts, as you are likely to be a relative novice in that field. So the good news is that other researchers have already published plenty of supporting and opposing arguments in this debate. The bad news is that you now have to find a wide range of these views through your own research. Fortunately, library staff are happy to help you with that, so do make full use of their support.

PRINCIPLES 2 & 3
EXPLORING THE DEBATE & SYNTHESISING AUTHORS' IDEAS

Summarising

As noted earlier, the first stage of assignment writing requires some description of each theoretical idea that you are researching. This involves **summarising** what the author is proposing – the main findings or claims. You need to study those carefully until you have fully grasped the essential theoretical proposition of that source. You should then be able to summarise that by capturing the main idea(s) in fewer words than used by the original author.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is about showing the reader that you have understood the original idea be being able to rephrase that in your own words, whilst still remaining faithful to the author's original idea. **You must bring a citation with this paraphrased version because the idea still 'belongs' to the author.** The key development at this paraphrasing stage is that you should be interpreting that original idea to your assignment focus. That is where your own voice begins to emerge by relating others' ideas to your essay question.

Summarising and Paraphrasing essentially involve simplifying others' original ideas into language that briefly expresses your understanding.
As Einstein said,
"If you cannot explain something simply, it means that you do not understand it."

Synthesising

Your own voice continues to develop through the choice of authors' ideas that you bring into the essay, and the way that you synthesise these, i.e. how you bring them together.

Once you have captured the essential idea(s) from one author, you can then move on to consider other authors' research and views on that same topic. As you explore the debate through this process of clarifying what each author is claiming, you will naturally start relating the different ideas to each other. So the process of **synthesis** is closely connected to **exploring the debate**. Both involve comparing and contrasting a range of academic views around the particular topic of your assignment question.

This involves first bringing together your theoretical summaries of ideas from different authors to show how some are similar. This allows you to indicate the relevance or implications of these similarities for your assignment question. Then, you can contrast this established view with other authors' qualifying or contradictory ideas. You indicate how these differences are significant, and why the authors believe in them.

Synthesis means to weigh up the strengths and limitations of different arguments based on the reasons proposed by their different authors.

PRINCIPLE 4
CHALLENGING OTHERS' VIEWS

Again, we can see that this principle is inextricably linked to the previous ones. In contrasting some authors' ideas to other authors' ideas, you are already using these to challenge each other. This is very important – a critique of any theory will be far more credible when it emerges through your presentation of other academic authors' challenges to the theory. In other words, you do not need to put pressure on yourself to highlight weaknesses in a theory from your relatively inexperienced judgement alone. Actually, the tutor will be much more impressed with how well you have gathered evidence from other academic sources that somehow contests the first theory, rather than seeming to rely on your own opinion.

APPLYING THEORY TO PRACTICE

You can see from her comments below that one of the tutors, Scott (2016), is suggesting critical analysis may involve some subsequent principles beyond the four identified above. These further principles involve relating the identified theory to real-life business situations. This makes sense as the purpose of many assignments is to utilise theory to analyse practice. So, students are often expected to relate and apply their knowledge of theory, models, or specific practice to a stated case or situation.

> *"I don't feel I can rank these in order of importance as I don't see it this way. I think there is a development in critical thinking which starts with questioning (1), then moves to exploring the debate further (11), comparing and contrasting ideas (7), challenging views (4), applying theories (8), then offering solutions (10) and developing strategic recommendations (9).*

I would not expect an average first year student to be able to get to (9), but I would be looking for progress towards (4). 2nd years I would be expecting at least (4) and the majority to be able to get to (8), 3rd years (10) and possibly (11) but definitely an ability to get to (11) at Masters."

So, Scott agrees with the same four principles above, and goes on to add others that she would expect to see in more advanced students' work, as indicated in the figure below:

	UG1	UG2	UG3	PG
Questioning what you read and hear - (1)				
Exploring the debate around a topic - (11)				
Comparing and contrasting others' ideas - (7)				
Challenging others' views on a topic - (4)				
Applying theories to business situations - (8)				
Offering solutions for business problems - (10)				
Developing strategic recommendations - (9)				

NB:

- Dark bar shows the expected developmental progression of average students

- Light bar shows the desired progression of high achievers

Applying theory to practice involves looking for examples in the business world that seem to **reflect** a particular theoretical point of view. Conversely, you can also consider any business experiences – your own or other case studies - that apparently **contradict** the theoretical claims. This emphasises the two-way nature of this aspect of critical analysis: You can utilise theory to explain and inform business practice, and you may also show how a specific, real-life situation challenges some aspects of a theory.

So, again, as with all other aspects of critical analysis, this requires a **questioning approach** in your academic reading and writing. As you study theoretical ideas in relation to business cases, you can ask many questions, including:

- **How** does this theory explain what is happening in the corporate world generally ?
- **How** does this theory illustrate what is happening in a specific, relevant business case study ?
- **Why** is this theory important for certain business problems or opportunities ?
- **How** does a business situation highlight any limitations in the theory ? This could, for example, be because that theory is not fully applicable in certain organisation, sector or country cultures.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS IN ESSAY STRUCTURE

The linear approach

This is a common way for students to plan for their assignments. A critically analytical essay could be structured in the following way, for example:

1. **Presenting** a particular point of view through summarising and paraphrasing of that idea from one source.
2. **Supporting** that point of view with evidence from a number of authors, who are broadly in agreement.
3. **Explainin**g those authors' reasons for that viewpoint.
4. **Interpreting** the relevance of that idea for your particular question focus.
5. **Conceding** that whilst that point of view has merit, it may have limitations in certain situations, or that it has been qualified / countered by later research.
6. **Presenting** the counter-argument through summarising and paraphrasing of that alternative point of view.
7. **Supporting** that new idea with evidence from a number of other authors who are broadly in agreement.
8. **Explainin**g the reasons for these authors' different viewpoint.

9. **Interpreting** the relevance of that idea for your particular question focus.
10. **Concluding** with a position that reflects your perception of the balance of evidence presented throughout the essay.

The interweaving approach

An alternative approach is **to 'interweave' supporting and countering arguments around a key idea within each paragraph or section of the essay.** You still cover the elements in the list above, but perhaps more convincingly by relating the pros and cons of different points of view more immediately.

This approach may provide even more opportunity to demonstrate your analytical understanding of the debate around the topic in question. The tutor can see this quite directly as you have to show immediately that you have grasped the debate around each key topic.

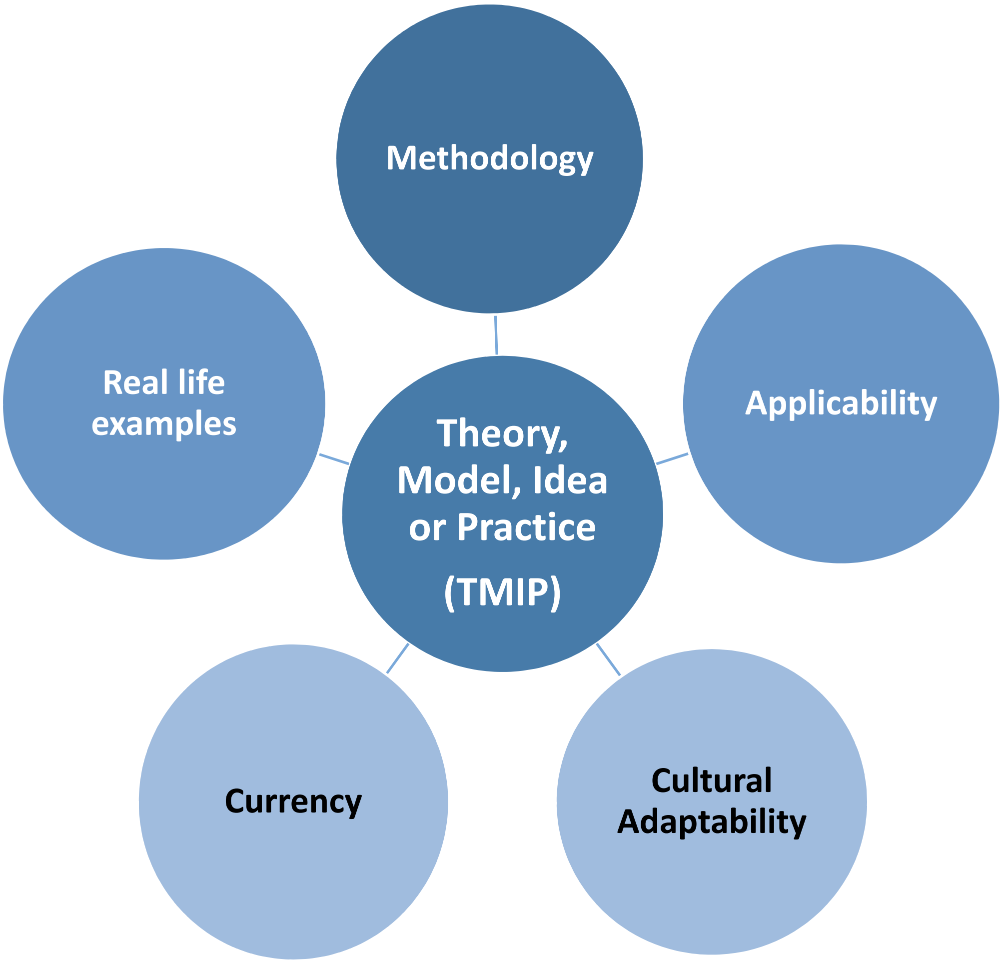
Most importantly, you have the freedom to decide how you present evidence of both supporting and countering views in an assignment. This is where creativity and originality comes in: The way that you integrate these 'different shades of grey' represents your unique voice in assignment writing.

So, we have explored what critical analysis means. The following section will introduce three 'critical analysis' frameworks that can help you investigate in depth any new theory, model, idea or working practice (TMIP) that you encounter.

THE 'TMIP MINDMAPPING' APPROACH TO CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking is about **evaluating** the **utility** of any theory, model, idea or practice (TMIP) in the context in which it is applied. At the heart of critical thinking is **a process of questioning**….

Possible dimensions you could explore are: **Applicability, Cultural Adaptability, Currency, Examples and Methodology** as shown below:



Source: Adapted from Cottrell (2011)

Some typical questions and issues you may consider in directing your critical reading within this framework are:

Applicability

- Does the TMIP really fit the particular situation in question ?
- What do you know about this situation that may limit the TMIP's usefulness for the business context you are considering ?
- Which corporate problems or opportunities might the TMIP **not** suit. **Why ?**

Cultural Adaptability

- Is the TMIP only applicable in certain social or cultural contexts ?
- Which situations might the TMIP **not** suit and **why** ?
- Remember many TMIP are derived from western countries, which are not likely to be fully adaptable to other cultural contexts worldwide.

Currency

- Is the TMIP still valid today ?
- If the TMIP was published some years ago, has this been supplanted by later research studies ?
- Have you explored the relevant field of academic literature to check that ?

Real Life Examples

- Where is the TMIP evident in practice ?
- You need to show examples of where this TMIP applies to real-life organisations.
- This may be across different sectors / industries or within a specific company depending on the focus of your assignment.

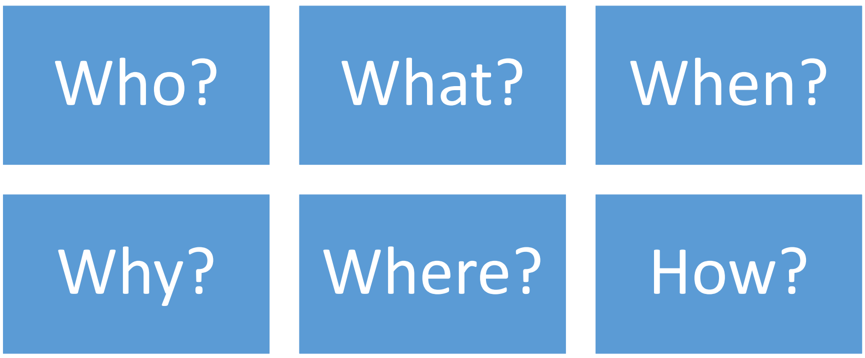
Methodology

- How did the author(s) arrive at the results ?
- How did they collect their data ?
- For example, how many people did they survey or interview in their primary research ?
- Are these sample sizes endorsed for these kinds of research objectives by research design textbooks ?

Depending on the type and requirement of the assignment, it is unlikely that you need to include all five elements of this framework in an essay. For example, if you are asked to critique a journal article, emphasis on the research methodology will be important. If you are asked to evaluate the utility of a theoretical model for a real business situation, your emphasis may be on applicability, currency and cultural adaptability.

THE '5W & 1H' APPROACH TO DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This is an interrogative technique used by journalists, but works well for prompting you to identify which questions to ask about any theory, model, idea or business practice (TMIP):



WHO:

- Who has proposed the TMIP ?
- Are they experts in this topic ?
- What is their authority in this field ?
- How can you tell ?

WHAT:

- What were their main arguments, points or hypotheses ?
- You need to make sure you understand any arguments being made before you continue exploring the debate further and forming your own views.

WHEN:

- When did they publish their ideas ?
- This is important as it raises the question, 'Is the TMIP still valid today ?'
- Its relevance may be challenged or superseded by more recent research.

WHY

- It can be helpful to explore why the authors published these ideas:
- Was this in response to a particular business problem, economic situation ?
- Does there seem to be any obvious bias there ?
- You could consider whether the authors have a particular agenda by considering their academic or professional interests.

WHERE:

- Is the TMIP only applicable in certain social, economic, cultural or geographical contexts ? **Why ?**
- How do other contexts challenge the utility of this TMIP ?
- What are the its limitations in these contexts ?

HOW:

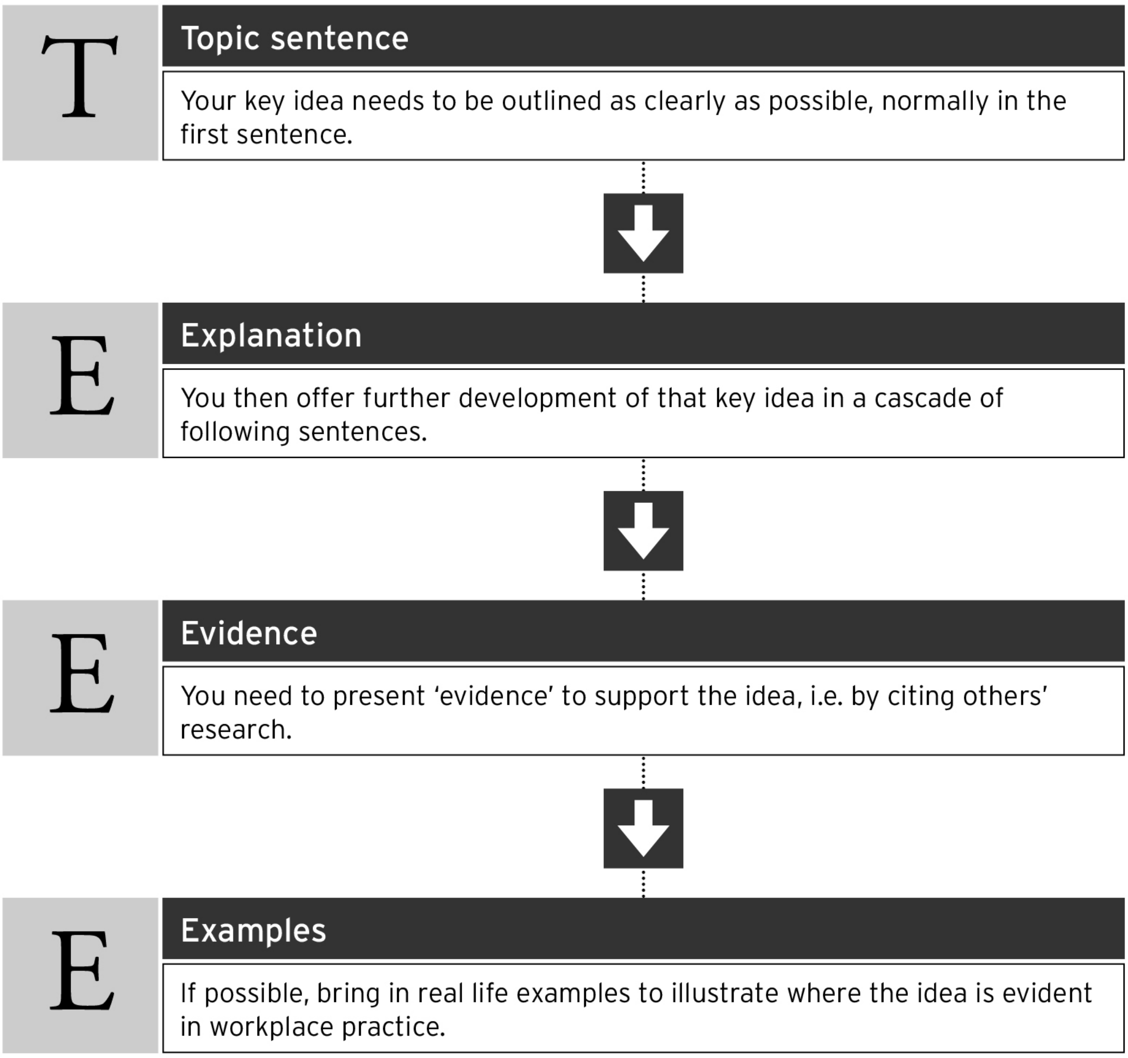
- How did the authors come to the conclusion of TMIP ?
- How do the authors propose the TMIP be applied to different business contexts ?
- **How is this concept relevant to your question focus ?**

Source: Adapted from Woolliams et al. (2009)

THE 'TEEE' APPROACH TO DEVELOPING AN ARGUMENT

Essay and exam questions often ask you to explain a relationship between different factors. This might be to explore how one independent variable influences another dependent variable, i.e. 'cause and effect'. Another common requirement can be to compare and contrast different theoretical models, i.e. 'pros and cons'. So it is important to explain these as clearly and fully as possible.

The TEEE framework offers a helpful structure for developing your arguments deeply and explicitly in paragraphs. **Each paragraph should only focus on discussing one single idea (Unity), and all the sentences should relate to that single idea (Coherence).**



You do not always have to present all four elements of the TEEE framework within one paragraph, nor do you always need to follow the above sequence. This is not a prescribed formula, but rather a useful guideline to follow.

SAMPLE ESSAYS

Example Essay 1 on the next page illustrates how a student develops different sides of an argument around a debatable topic in an objective way.

Before you read through the essay, take some time first to consider the first step in critical analysis, which is always to analyse the question:

- What are the key words in the essay question below ?
- Is there an established assumption or tension in that question …?

Essay question:

Bringing emotions to work should be a pleasure, but in practice it is often a pain. Discuss this proposition, using examples and by referring to different skill levels and occupations.

Write your thoughts in the box below:

Key words: Any obvious assumption or tension in the question?

- Key words for analysis are **‘bringing emotion to work’**. But what does this mean ? It may be important to explain this concept first with some brief explanation of how this may apply in practice, using academic evidence, i.e. references.

- Also, the essay question highlights a possible tension of this being pleasurable and painful. Again, the possible causes of these two conflicting experiences need to be explained, with examples, as requested in the essay question.

- Finally, the invitation to ‘discuss’ this statement invites you to look at this topic from a range of perspectives and real life examples.

Read the essay and consider how successful you feel the student has been in critically analysing this question.   ELS comments are shown in boxes:

Example Essay 1 – Critical evaluation of a theoretical concept

Bringing emotions to work is bringing life and adding colour to a workplace. Emotions play a huge role when we interact with people and carry on our daily activities. The display of positive emotions is linked to customer satisfaction and retention (Kim 2008). The service workers are then required to show these emotions to meet the requirement of the customers as well as the organization in return for pay (Hochschild 1983). Because the employees’ emotions form an integral part of the business, organizations put effort into managing these effectively (Grugulis 2007). They require the operator to either ‘surface act’ or ‘deep act’ (Hochschild 1983). Some scholars argue that this is beneficial to the employee and the employer. However, other research suggests more detrimental consequences: If bringing emotion to work is argued to be pleasurable, why then, do the employees have to suffer for it? This essay therefore aims to explain how emotional labour in practice is harmful to the health of emotional workers in both high and low skilled jobs.

Clear introduction, targeting the question, which the student has reframed in her own words. This has also been strengthened by plenty of citations as it is never too early in an essay to show evidence of wider academic reading.

Grugulis (2007) observes that service companies often require that employees in the frontline, retail and customer service jobs maintain appropriate emotions when they interact with clients to render high-quality service. The customers' perception of how these services are delivered influences their service consumption, so the customers are not only buying the physical product, but also the employees' emotions (Yang et al. 2014). The relationship between the employees' emotions and customer satisfaction shows the workers' feelings that now form an integral part of the business have to be managed. Hochschild (1983) stated that the effort of workers to control emotions according to organizational standards in exchange for pay is known as emotional labour.

Sets out clearly what is meant by the key term in the question, again with reference to relevant, multiple sources. This paragraph does conclude with a definition of ***what*** *emotional labour (EL) is (descriptive writing), but the preceding sentences of this second paragraph have already moved into analysis by explaining* ***how*** *and* ***why*** *this concept relates to important business and management processes.*

These organizational rules which are often called “display rules” tend to prescribe and supervise the emotions of the employee by training, company policies, co-worker observation, reward, and punishment. For instance, customer-facing workers are expected to have a cheerful face and a good sense of humour, bill collectors, and police are supposed to use angry looks and gestures to elicit cooperation, therapists are expected not to show any emotions when listening to people (Hochschild 1983; Grandey 2000). Holman et al. (2002) state that these expectations result in emotional dissonance, which occurs when there is a conflict between what a worker feels and what the organization expects him to express. As a result, the service workers are then required to either ‘surface act’, which simply is to fake emotions and suppress felt emotions, or “deep act”, which relies on the employee to use their training or past experience to display appropriate emotion in that particular situation (Kruml and Geddes 2000; Brotheridge and Grandey 2002). For example, although call centre workers often experience verbal abuse from customers, the organization expects them to remain calm and polite when dealing with such clients (Grandey et al. 2004).

This confirms the student’s extensive understanding of the key concept through the use of relevant, real-life examples from other authors’ research, albeit in a generalised way. This seems to be building an evidenced argument in favour of the proposition in the essay title, i.e. that bringing emotions to work may be painful rather than pleasurable.

For some service workers, they view their job role as exciting and rewarding. Shuler and Cypher (2000) in their study stated how 911 emergency call centre dispatchers enjoy the emotional aspect of their job and find it as the best and rewarding part. Grugulis (2007) also affirms that the service workers take pleasure in their job regardless of strict routine. This is as a result of the rapport they share with customers. She stated that the warmth and care they invoke in the customers touch them as well, hence producing genuine happiness. Kim (2008) however indicated that whilst these natural outcomes are linked to positive display rules of the organization which promotes job satisfaction, negative display rules which come with expectations from the organization are related to job dissatisfaction (Diefendorff and Richard 2003).

The student has now established a critical tension by showing a more positive side to bringing emotions to work. Two sides of the question’s suggested paradox (emotional pleasure v. pain) are now being developed. However, this relies on the concepts of ‘negative and positive display rules’ introduced here, which could perhaps benefit from further explanation or examples to confirm the student’s understanding of these.

Emotional labour is also seen to be beneficial to the employees because it increases professionalism and self-efficacy. For instance, Curley and Royle (2013) state how airline cabin crew members were taught how to deal with customers by treating them as guests in their home. They were encouraged to view themselves as professionals in providing quality service by increasing their self-esteem. Ashton and Humphrey (1993) also stated that emotional labour helps workers during interaction to predict outcomes and this help them to avoid interpersonal issues that can relate to job dissatisfaction. However, Humphrey et al. (2009) stated that for these to be of benefit to the employee as well as the employer, they have to recruit the right kind of people and train them appropriately.

Whilst the student does seem to be building an argument for the value of bringing emotions to work, she is continuing to employ an analytical approach by interweaving arguments for and against the proposition within each paragraph. She does this by using different authors' contrasting views, or at least, as in this case, one author qualifying others' views with certain conditions, i.e. careful recruitment and training. This critical process continues into the next paragraph.

According to Zaph (2002) engaging in emotional labour helps to ease other things and improve service and in some occupation, it is a goal in itself. For instance, a dentist trying to cheer up a child to ease his treatment and a hostess at a night club whose goal is to make the customers happy. However, Kruml and Geddes (2000) in their study stated that this depends on the age, the skill, the level of experience, the display latitude, the quality orientation and the emotional attachment of the service workers.

However, despite the benefit of emotional labour, there are some consequences the service workers face when engaged in it. According to Hoschild (1983) and Yang et al. (2014) the display of emotions frequently results in loss of energy which causes fatigue and leads to emotional exhaustion. This is because most service workers have to continuously manage their feelings, and often engage in expressing feelings that are not congruent. For instance, teachers are expected to maintain certain expressions when teaching children, and this often leads to alienation which is sometimes detected by the pupils (Zapf 2002; Philip and Schupbach 2010). Holman et al. (2002) stated that organizational policies serve as a performance monitoring tool and the fear of being punished only make the employees put more effort into expressing managed emotions. This effort of hiding feelings often leads to self-alienation and exhaustion, and decreases the well-being of the employee.

Having shown some potential benefits to EL, the student is now clearly leading the rest of the essay into a position of agreeing that bringing emotions to work is, on balance, a negative experience for a majority of affected workers. See how the student continues over the next three paragraphs to harness several different academic sources and real-life examples to strongly support this emerging view.

The issue of work-life conflict also poses a serious problem on the employee. Grugulis (2007) stated that the personal life of the worker suffers due to the simulation of forced feelings for an extended period at work. Kinman (2009) also said that the role interchange from work to personal life often leads to sleeping difficulties, social withdrawal, and this can damage family life and cause a loss of interest in leisure activities. For instance, a police officer who is exposed to emotionally difficult circumstances such as accidents, death, crime on a daily basis (Brunetto et al. 2014).

Another significant consequence of emotional labour is burnout. In the health care services, there is a high demand to be more empathetic and emotionally involved. The management of emotions plays a significant role in the job and with this comes with a high expectation to do a good job (Zaph 2002). Peate (2016) stated that this accumulated stress further leads to the health care worker detaching emotionally from her work. He further gave an example that with the introduction of the 12-hour shifts, nurses have no choice but to come into contact with families and friends of patients. They are required to maintain empathy and professionalism during this period which often leads to stress. Peate (2016) cited in Cimotti et al. (2012) also noted that this emotional stress could contribute to healthcare-associated infections.

A primary concern for every organization is employee turnover. Goodwin et al. (2011) in their study stated that there is an adverse effect on employee turnover from surface acting. The employee is not only at the receiving end of the continuous 'fake' acting; the organization as well tends to incur cost when these staff leave the company. Chau et al. (2009) in his study reported that a high increase in surface acting through emotional exhaustion is the primary cause of employee turnover.

In conclusion, bringing emotions to work is crucial because the employees' emotion is an integral aspect of the business. The organization's success depends on how the employees display appropriate emotions - hence the need to manage it properly. This leads organizations to implement control policies such as training and set regulations for employees to follow which are described as 'display rules.' Despite the benefit of such emotional labour, many research studies have shown that the effect of emotional labour is detrimental to the overall well-being of the employee. The employees' emotions, therefore, should be cared for and treated as importantly as that of the customers. This implies that a positive work environment develops healthy workers and ensures stress related factors are minimised which will, in turn, produce job satisfaction, customer retention, and organizational productivity.

The conclusion sums up the main theme of the essay, emphasizing that this essentially agrees with the question proposition. This had also asked the student to refer to different skill levels, and perhaps there could be more explicit examples of those. However, she has used some general examples, further supported by plenty of academic citations. These have been accurately referenced along with the final list of sources shown below.

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Example Essay 2 - Applying theories to practice

Example Essay 2 on the next page shows how one student applied theoretical concepts to business situations. **Here is what one management tutor explains she is looking for from this kind of essay:**

Assignment guidance

Most organisational issues are complex and it is likely that more than one factor may be important in any situation. For example, one of the challenges of leadership is about understanding and managing the organisation's culture, and this may well affect motivation within the organisation. However, attempting to cover too many areas in one assignment will inevitably lead to a superficial piece of work. It is perfectly acceptable to comment on how different factors interact but focus the discussion on one or two topics to provide greater depth of analysis.

The purpose of the assignment is to utilise theory to analyse practice. An assignment that makes little or no reference to a real organisational situation and appropriate theoretical and conceptual issues will not fulfil the above brief, and is likely to receive a fail grade.

The assignment asks for a critical analysis. This is not simply a description either of the situation in your organisation of choice or of relevant theory. It means using the theory to explain what went on in the organisation – not just what happened, but why things happened in a particular way and why they led to particular outcomes. Here a critical analysis means evaluating the utility of theory – how far is it of assistance in understanding organisational issues and problems and suggesting recommendations for future practice ?

In summary, your assignment needs to do the following:

- *demonstrate a critical understanding of a range of relevant literature*
- *apply this appropriately in order to analyse one or two organisational topics covered on the module*
- *facilitate insights and understanding of both theory and practice and enable conclusions to be drawn about both.*

This approach to critical analysis is illustrated in the following extract taken from an MBA student's essay. In this case, she has been asked to select an area of Operations Management theory from the module, and use that to explain what has been happening in an organization with which she is familiar. These selected paragraphs illustrate good practice in this aspect of critical analysis. ELS comments are included in the boxes:

Essay title:

How Distinct Technology Services applied lean six sigma principles to improve its purchasing processes

Introduction

Distinct Technology Services (DTS) is a Business-to-Business (B2B) telecommunication, network infrastructure and data service provider with operating offices in 15 Western European countries, India and North America, with the head office in London. About five years ago, the company centralised its Finance and Human Resources functions and relocated them to India in a cost cutting programme. The first phase of the project was a 'lift and shift' of the processes, while the second phase was focused on simplification and improvement using lean six sigma techniques (Atmaca and Girenes 2013). The essay will examine one of the projects undertaken by DTS to see if the lean six sigma techniques were effectively applied, identify the weakness in the changes made and highlight other improvement opportunities that could be achieved.

> *A focused introduction, detailing the company situation and relevant operational management processes.*

Purchase Order Process Improvement

Atmaca and Girenes (2013) argued that most desirable results are obtained when lean and six sigma techniques are combined in a manner that both support each other. DTS combined both lean and six sigma techniques to improve the speed of creating purchase orders, improve quality of purchase orders, reduce variation, improve the process capability and enable a process that is statistically under control (Bernardo 2013). The six-sigma methodology- Define, Measure, Analysis, Improve and Control (DMAIC) was used to manage the improvement (Anupama 2014). The improvement approach adopted was based on the exploitation theory with focus on standardizing the process and creating efficiency through elimination of waste and improve the throughput time (Slack et al. 2016).

The student presents a theoretical overview of the approaches used in the company, through different academic sources.

Problem Definition

The business problem was - 15% of all purchases that require purchase order do not have a purchase order, resulting in €4.6 million uncontrolled spend per annum. An additional average of 3 minutes is required to process invoices with no PO which accounts for about 5 man days per month. PO compliance report is not accurate because some suppliers are wrongly classified as 'PO not mandatory'. The project goals were:

- Improve the monthly proportion of invoices with PO by 10% from 85% to 95% (equivalent of €1.7M monthly spent), which will increase right first time PO process by 10%.
- Improve PO creation efficiency for occasional users by 75% with target time to create PO not longer than 10 minutes.

The project scope covers all items classified as 'PO mandatory'. Items classified as 'PO exempt' were out of scope. The problem statement, project goal and scope were well defined with quantified data, which provides clarity and collective understanding of the business issues for all the process stakeholders (Dag 2013; Habidin and Yusof 2013). There are various stages and entities interacting with the process, each performing distinct roles. The

Supplier, Input, Process, Output and Customer (SIPOC) model (Table 1, appendix 1) was used to group the various stages and the interaction of various entities within the process (Aditya 2010). This is an appropriate tool to show who does what, when and at what stage. Everyone impacted by the process was included in the improvement process (Slack et al. 2016).

Clear explanation of the business problem. There is a risk at this stage of spending too much word count on over-detailed factual description. In this case, it is fairly well summarised, and is also taken a stage further by justifying the choice of operational processes through theoretical support. So the application element of critical analysis is already at work in the essay.

Problem Measure

A selected number of process customers were interviewed to collect the voice of the customers (VOC) (Martinez and Gitlow 2011; Bernardo 2013). VOC assessment provides customers' quality requirements which are crucial for improvement. Quality is the foundation and a driver of improvement (Slack et al. 2016), according to Sandcone theory. The quality requirements were designed into the data collection plan (Nicholas and Matthew 2010), sample data were measured to determine the 'as is' process performance (baseline process sigma score) (Anupama 2014).

Initial analysis of sample data revealed that there are three different user groups- High volume users (Professional buyers), Frequent users and Occasional users. Times to create a PO by different user groups were measured (Figures 9, 10 and 11 in Appendix 2), specification limits of 95% purchases with PO, and 10 minutes to create PO with 5-minute tolerance were agreed with the Improvement Sponsor (Bernardo 2013; Dag 2013). Statistical Process Control (SPC) and capability analysis were conducted to monitor performance and measure the quality of PO creation process (Angus 2010) (Figures 12 and 14, Appendix 2).

The results showed that the process is stable, but not capable. Time to create a PO by 'Occasional PO users' is off specification limits (Slack et al. 2016), which accounts for the process incapability. Demonstrating that the process is stable with capability analysis is important, because if the process is unstable, the first step is to stabilise the process (Wachs and Wachs 2005). This approach is supported by Bernardo's work which states that "Six Sigma is a data-driven process improvement methodology used to achieve stable and predictable process results, reducing process variation and defects" (Bernardo 2013: 185).

The operational explanations become quite technical here, which is a natural consequence when a student has such detailed experience in an organisation. The challenge here is for the student to not fall into the trap of only describing what has been happening in the company. Instead, this student does well to move into analysis by continually relating the organisational outcomes to theoretical concepts from her module studies. These are well used here to support the organisational analysis. So we can see that the student is employing the element of critical analysis involved in ***applying theory to practice****.*

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