

Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (All Submissions)

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Authentic Assessment - Critical debate improves scholarly practice

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Abstract: Educators are struggling to maintain contemporary meaningful learning and authentic assessments that contribute to engagement in a rapidly changing, complex contemporary context. This paper considers the incorporation of argumentation within a critical debate as a next generation innovative learning and assessment method to develop criticality and deepen student engagement in complex environments improving scholarly practice. This empirical research found that students value the enhanced learning and enjoyed the authentic assessment experience that critical debate makes to critical thinking, knowledge acquisition and student engagement. Critical debate contributes theoretically and practical to innovative learning and assessment methods, which adapts to our contemporary dynamic context. Debate stimulates learners' to engage more deeply with knowledge and progressed learners' confidence and self-awareness. Results indicate improvement in students' learning skills such as research, criticality, concise writing, peer to peer learning, collaboration and reflection.

Paper:

As educators, how do we innovate meaningful assessment of learning that adapts in order to encompass the complexity in today's Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) management environment.? How do we support undergraduates to be "work ready", so that they can operate in complex environments reflecting the speed of change, internationalization and borderless online technology(VUCA). Educators need to be able to explore contemporary complex contexts such as Brexit, internationalization, globalization and social dilemmas in a deeper, more meaningful and engaging way. To educate in this dynamic context requires adaptive, dynamic learning and assessment methods.

Informed argument requires identification, selection, use, and evaluation of evidence in building

knowledge. This knowledge helps us transition to higher-order critical thinking and reasoning (Kuhn 1992). Following the above rationales, this research aims to investigate critical debate as an assessment tool within the context of students' perception of learning engagement and progression, review the existing literature on critical debate and analyze student's perceptions of the use of critical debate in management education.

There are a number of studies where critical debate has been used informally by some educators within the field of management (Rapanta and Macagno, 2016), though in general critical debate is in its infancy stage as regards being used formally as an assessment tool Eskin and Ogan-Bekiroglu (2013). In contrast, a critical debate has been universally employed by the students of law and religion and politics in learning and assessment (Dreyfus, 2003; Edwards, 2011 and Hong, 2017). These disciplines are expected to advocate and defend their arguments in temples, churches, courts and democratic proceedings to challenge, persuade and claim authority during the public oral discourse.

Debate using critical reasoning is an effective tool to improve students' skills of reasoning, for example in religious studies, it challenges and removes erroneous conceptions. With regular practice of critical debate, the students have a superior assessment of on-the-spot 'counter' arguments (Hackett, 2012), suggesting they are more deeply engaged with the learning and understanding. (Kuhn, 1992, 2010; Muller-Mirza and Perret-Clermont, 2009; Rapanta and Macagno, 2016) The pedagogically critical debate is argued to encompass four areas:- 1. thinking, 2. teaching, 3. learning, and 4. collaborating. Monte-Sano (2016) found that critical debate has positive effects on the students' research, writing as well as collaborative skills, in which all enhance the students' effective participation later on in their civic life by developing students skills in explanation of empirical evidence, which exhibits chronological thinking in the construction of arguments.

As a learning process, it has been proven to increase the students' speed of learning, the development of verbal skills and the progression of critical thinking as well as their social skills. In addition, critical debate creates critical divergence, and it actively promotes the students' interaction and engagement with complex issues (Monte-Sano, 2016; Zorwick and Wade, 2016). Eskin and Ogan-Bekiroglu's (2013) findings indicate that by using data and evidence to support their arguments, and the application of analytical and reasoning skills to strengthen students' counter-arguments significantly, critical debate develops students' learning progression. Jackson (2015) built on Eskin and Ogan-Bekiroglu (2013) findings and asserts that critical debate can be used pedagogically to enhance the students' quality of reasoning and advance the students' robust argumentation and hypothetical statements.

Consistently, a critical debate has exerted positive effects on the students' learning progression and leadership learning self-efficacy (Eskin and Ogan-Bekiroglu, 2013; Monte-Sano, 2016; Najafi, et al., 2016; Zorwick and Wade, 2016). Rapanta and Badran (2016) conducted a country study in response to the emerging need in the United Arab Emirates to prepare future leaders. The participants observed a significant change in how they perceived themselves as leaders as a result of the critical debate (Rapanta and Badran, 2016). Moreover, the persuasiveness of their collective arguments was seen to improve considerably when the critical debate followed a formal structure.

This research evaluates the use of critical debate as an assessment tool. Inferential statistics were used (inferring from the sample data the students' perception of the critical debate). Across the three

years (2015-18), 927 students evaluated the debate, perception feedback from 927 undergraduates was collected, however, only 515 observations were usable because of the incompleteness of responses.

The findings included student's perceptions were collected using the four developmental ways established in the literature review, in relation to 1. thinking, 2. teaching, 3. learning, and 4. collaborating.

Overall, the students strongly agreed that they had attained (1) a very good level of understanding of the subject and with a low standard deviation of 0.489 indicating most people felt similar. The implementation and organization of the group critical debate (row 2) were perceived positively by the students as a well-organized module, the relatively low standard of deviation indicates that most students have similar positive feelings regarding the way the module and the critical debate were organized.

The students strongly agree that (3) the assessment was considered fair to measure the students' ability and with a low standard deviation of 0.425 indicating most people felt similar. In addition, the module and the critical debate(4) had challenged them and enabled them to achieve their best work.

Argumentation is a fundamental cognitive skill required for the 21st-century thinking citizen (Kuhn, 2010). The ability to generate and evaluate sound arguments has received increasing recognition as fundamental to higher order critical thinking (Mercier, 2011), since "argumentation is a dialogue in which participants may take many different positions, deeply engage in the subject knowledge and change their minds as it proceeds" (Deane & Song, 2014, p. 100). People use arguments on a daily basis for different purposes such as persuasion, negotiation, debate, consultation and resolving differences of opinion (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, & Henkemans, 1996).

Management educators could use formal critical debate as a formative learning and assessment tool during these turbulent times to assist learners to adapt and learn. Business and management schools are late adopters of using critical debates as assessment tools.

Critical debate offers wider and deeper learning opportunities for students. McIntosh and Milam, (2016) reveal that critical debate has the potential to develop not only the students' thinking but also the students' critical skills, such as speaking and listening skills, mathematical and analytical skills, and dialogue facilitation skills.

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