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**CRITICAL
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JANE BOTTOMLEY, KULWINDER MAUDE, STEVEN PRYJMACHUK AND DAVID WAUGH

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Introduction

Critical Thinking Skills is the third book in the *Critical Study Skills for Education* series. This series supports student teachers and education professionals as they embark on their undergraduate degree programme. It is aimed at all student teachers, including those who have come to university straight from A levels, and those who have travelled a different route, perhaps returning to education after working and/or raising a family. The books will be of use both to students from the UK and to international students who are preparing to study in a new culture – and perhaps in a second language. The books also include guidance for students with specific learning requirements.

Critical Thinking Skills aims to remove some of the ‘mystique’ which often surrounds critical thinking – students sometimes hear that they are ‘not critical’ enough but may struggle to understand just what this means in practical terms. This book guides you towards an understanding of critical thinking and its role in academic and professional life, with plain-English explanations and practical examples provided throughout. It discusses the importance of questioning what you see and hear, and equips you with a range of analytical and evaluative tools. It places reflective practice at the heart of critical thinking and provides language tools which can help you express your reflections more precisely. It provides strategies to help you read and write critically, using the research and writing process to discover and develop your own voice, an essential part of being a critical scholar.

Between them, the authors have many years’ experience of both school teaching and education, and academic study skills. All the information, text extracts and activities in the book have a clear education focus and are often directly linked to the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2011).

The many activities in the book include **tasks**, **reflections**, **top tips**, and **case studies**. There are also **advanced skills** sections, which highlight particular knowledge and skills that you will need towards the end of your degree programme – or perhaps if you go on to postgraduate study. The activities in the book often require you to work things out and discover things for yourself, a learning technique which is commonly used in universities. For many activities, there is no right or wrong answer – they might simply require you to reflect on your experience or situations you are likely to encounter at university; for tasks which require a particular response, there is an answer key at the back of the book.

These special features throughout the book are clearly signalled by icons to help you recognise them:

-  Learning outcomes;
-  Quick quiz or example exam questions/assessment tasks;
-  Reflection (a reflective task or activity);
-  Case studies;
-  Top tips;

-  Checklist;
-  Advanced skills information;
-  Answer provided at the back of the book.

Students with limited experience of academic life in the UK will find it helpful to work through the book systematically; more experienced students may wish to 'dip in and out' of the book. Whichever approach you adopt, handy **cross references** signalled in the margins will help you quickly find the information that you need to focus on or revisit.

There are two **Appendices** (Academic levels at university; Verb tenses in English) at the back of the book, which you can consult as you work through the text.

We hope that this book will help you to develop as a critical education student, and to become a confident member of your academic community.

A note on terminology

In the context of this book, the term 'education' should be used to include 'teaching, teacher training and the allied education professionals' wherever this is not explicitly stated.

Chapter 1

The foundations of critical thinking

Learning outcomes

After reading this chapter you will:

- understand what is meant by 'critical thinking';
- understand the relevance and importance of critical thinking in the theory and practice of education;
- have begun to learn how to apply critical thinking to your studies and to your education practice.

There are many books and courses in schools, colleges and universities entitled 'Critical Thinking' (like this book!), a fact which reflects its importance in education, particularly in universities. However, critical thinking is not a discrete study topic like those in other books and modules you may encounter (for example, 'English, maths and science knowledge and understanding in primary education' or 'Pedagogy and school experience'); critical thinking is actually threaded through every aspect of your studies and your practice.

This chapter helps you begin to trace and understand this thread. It explores important aspects of critical thinking in academic study and in educational practice, in particular, the importance of objectively questioning the information and ideas you encounter. Chapter 2 explores reflective practice, which is closely related to critical thinking and is a key aspect of teaching. Chapters 3 and 4 cover how to *apply* critical thinking skills in your academic reading and writing.

Of course, it is not possible to think critically about an education topic if you are not grounded in the *knowledge* of your discipline, and all the guidance and tasks in this book will be rooted in your developing knowledge of education theory and practice.

CROSS
REFERENCE

Chapter 2,
Reflective
practice

CROSS
REFERENCE

Chapter 3,
Critical
reading

CROSS
REFERENCE

Chapter 4,
Critical
writing

Reflection

- 1) What do you understand by the term 'critical thinking'?
- 2) Why do you think critical thinking, as you understand it, is so important across education and professional practice?
- 3) Which parts of the Teachers' Standards make reference to critical thinking?
- 4) Have you ever received feedback from a teacher or lecturer which said you had not been critical enough? Did you understand what you had done wrong?

- ↑ 5) Have you felt that something you recently read or heard was lacking in critical thinking? Why?
- 6) In what ways do you think you can demonstrate criticality in your studies and your teaching practice?

Asking the right questions

A good place to start with critical thinking is with the idea of asking questions in order to get to the truth. This idea can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, who is said to have laid down the roots of western philosophy by questioning everything around him, and by demonstrating time and again that seemingly knowledgeable people, himself included, often didn't really know what they thought they knew!

An example [of Socrates's questioning approach] was his conversation with Euthydemus. Socrates asked him whether being deceitful counted as being immoral. Of course it does, Euthydemus replied. He thought that was obvious. But what, Socrates asked, if your friend is feeling very low and might kill himself, and you steal his knife? Isn't that a deceitful act? Of course it is. But isn't it moral rather than immoral to do that? It's a good thing, not a bad one – despite being a deceitful act.

(Warburton, 2012, p 2)

Socrates' thinking may seem like common sense: most of us can think of examples of 'deceit' – the telling of 'white lies', for instance – which are intended to help rather than harm people. But the important point is that Socrates was questioning received wisdom and relying solely on reasoned argument to arrive at the truth. The use of questioning and reasoned argument is central to academic and professional practice. This means, in essence, *not believing things merely because someone important says they are true*, and making sure your own beliefs are constructed around sound reasoning and credible evidence.

Knowledge and understanding in educational theory and practice are developing all the time. This inevitably means that sometimes there are instances of received wisdom which turn out to be wrong. This may be because not enough was known about a particular thing at a given time, or it may be that people did not ask enough questions – or at least the *right* questions.

Task



Exploring changes in thinking 1

Look at the case studies below and answer these questions:

- 1) What was the current knowledge or 'received wisdom' in each case?
- 2) How was this challenged?
- 3) What, if anything, do you think should happen now?

Case studies



The Nappy Science Gang

When shopping for washing powder in any UK supermarket, we are faced with the choice of biological or non-biological detergents. Many of us may not be sure of the difference between them, but the information generally available to consumers suggests that biological detergents are more powerful and better at removing dirt and stains because they contain enzymes (substances that speed up chemical reactions, in relation to cleaning in this case). Ideal for very dirty items like nappies, you might think. However, NHS advice, as reported through the *NHS Choices* website, has long been to wash babies' nappies in *non-biological* detergent, which seems to reflect the general belief among the UK population that biological detergents irritate the skin. Nappy manufacturers and other organisations traditionally aligned themselves with NHS advice. However, in 2015, *The Guardian* reported that the *Nappy Science Gang*, a citizens' science project supported by the *Wellcome Trust* and the *Royal Society of Chemistry*, had been questioning the NHS advice on detergent use. This group of parents cited studies which appeared to show that biological detergents were no more likely to cause skin irritation than non-biological detergents, with no connection being found between enzymes and skin complaints. They also pointed to the fact that this 'myth' of enzyme irritation appeared not to exist in other countries, where, in fact, it can be pretty difficult to find non-biological detergents. The *Nappy Science Gang* asked *NHS Choices* to investigate the evidence base for the advice they were issuing on their website. After consulting the literature and experts in the field, the NHS reported that they would be changing the advice given on their website. So, as reported in *The Guardian*, thanks to 'a bunch of volunteer mums who wouldn't stop asking questions' (Collins, 2015), and the readiness of the NHS to listen, advice on the *NHS Choices* website now reads: 'There's no evidence that using washing powders with enzymes (bio powders) or fabric conditioners will irritate your baby's skin.'

Phonics test results are a credit to the last government

Since 2010, the government has continued to emphasise the importance of teaching systematic synthetic phonics (SSP). The phonics screening tests were introduced in 2012. Since then, many teachers now devote a lot of time to teaching children how to read invented words to help them pass the test.

An article written in *The Guardian* in 2014 by an academic from Durham University argued that the improved screening test results are very welcome and are a good example of how consistent educational policies can bring benefits to children. However, the policies he cites in fact reflect credit on the previous government (1997–2010), who introduced a strong emphasis on the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics.

↑ The review of literacy teaching by Sir Jim Rose, again commissioned by the previous government in 2006, placed great emphasis upon phonics being taught in the context of a broad, rich language curriculum, with lots of experience of good-quality literature. The present government introduced a new national curriculum that stresses the importance of sharing literature with children. It is yet to be seen whether this will inculcate those young readers who have acquired basic phonics skills with a real desire to read for pleasure and purpose (Waugh, 2014).

The two case studies you have analysed are good examples of how experts question the existing public discourse or change their thinking when confronted with new evidence. There are many other areas of education where similar developments have occurred, some of them widely publicised in the media. As an education professional, it is important that you not only follow academic thinking on education issues as reported in textbooks and journals, but that you also keep an eye on how these issues are reported in the media. This should enable you to think critically and decide how to interpret policy documents issued by the government and research findings released by renowned academic institutions on, for example, debates surrounding the teaching of English and maths in the primary classroom. In addition, you may also have the opportunity to see issues from the parents' point of view – as they see education matters represented in the media. It links to sections 1.1 and 2.1 of the professional code of conduct issued by the Education and Training Foundation (based on the Teachers' Standards, 2014):

- Develop your own judgement by reflecting on what works best in your teaching and learning to meet the diverse needs of learners (Teachers' Standard 5).
- Maintain and update your knowledge of educational research to develop evidence-based practice (Teachers' Standard 3).

Task



Exploring changes in thinking 2

1) How, to your knowledge, has general thinking developed on the following topics over time?

- Behaviour management
 - Lesson planning and preparation
 - Teaching SEND and EAL learners
 - Pupil progress
 - Safeguarding children in school
 - Data protection
- ↓

- 2) Can you identify any important academic studies in these areas?
- 3) How have these topics been reported on in the news media?
- 4) What, if anything, do you think needs to happen now in each case?

Advanced skills



Hegel's dialectic

A philosophical process called Hegel's dialectic quite nicely describes the advancement of knowledge in an academic environment. (Hegel was a nineteenth-century German philosopher; 'dialectic' is a formal word that essentially means 'discussion'.)

As illustrated in Figure 1.1, the dialectic basically states that for every **thesis** (ie idea) there will be an antithesis or antitheses (alternative idea[s]). Following a period of debate (which can last years, decades or centuries), a **synthesis** (a merging or fusing) of these ideas emerges. However, this new synthesis becomes a thesis in its own right and the process starts all over again!

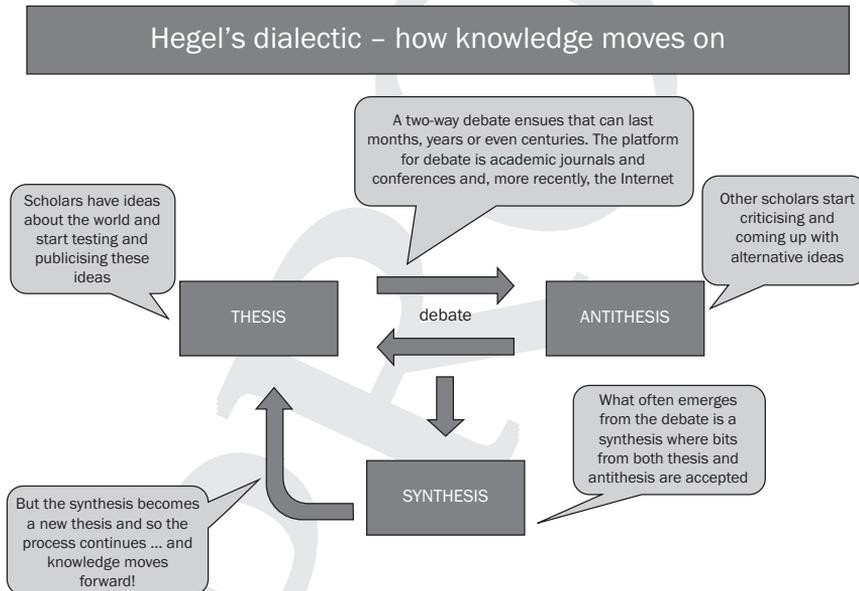


Figure 1.1: Hegel's dialectic

Students at Level 4 (first-year undergraduate students) should be able to demonstrate understanding of one side of the debate. Most students grasp this relatively easily and soon realise that they will get good marks at this academic level if they can convince the person reading (or marking) their work that they understand the concepts, ideas and theories they are writing about.

CROSS REFERENCE

Appendix 1, Academic levels at university

Answer key

Chapter 2, Reflective practice

Critically evaluating reflective frameworks

Task, Comparing and contrasting reflective frameworks (Page 21)

BROOKFIELD	GIBBS	JOHNS
Personal experiences	Description; feelings	Focus on a description of an experience that seems significant in some way. How was I feeling and what made me feel that way? How do I NOW feel about this experience?
The students' eyes	Evaluation; analysis	Which issues are significant and need attention? How do I interpret the way people were feeling and why they felt that way? What was I trying to achieve and did I respond effectively? What were the consequences of my actions on the patients, others and myself? What factors influenced the way I was/am feeling, thinking and responding to the situation? What knowledge informed me or might have informed me? To what extent did I act for the best and in tune with my values? How does the situation connect with previous experiences?

BROOKFIELD	GIBBS	JOHNS
Colleagues' perceptions	Conclusion; action plan	How might I reframe the situation and respond more effectively if a similar situation were to reoccur? What would be the consequences of alternative actions for the patients, others and myself? What factors might constrain me when responding in new ways? Am I more able to support myself and others better as a consequence? What insights have I gained? Am I more able to realise desirable practice?
Academic research		

The language of reflection

Task, Identifying useful words and phrases (Pages 31–33)

- 1) Reflection on current knowledge and attitudes – G
- 2) Describing feelings – D
- 3) Describing reactions to a situation or incident – E
- 4) Explaining feelings and reactions – A
- 5) Highlighting important points – B
- 6) Signalling how the situation or event has challenged previous thinking – C
- 7) Impact on practice – F

Chapter 4, Critical writing

What does it mean to write critically?

Task, Identifying critical use of language (Page 50)

- 1) **It seems that** teachers are under **significant** pressure to demonstrate that their work improves pupil outcomes, while at the same time coping with ever-increasing demands for inclusion. In order to meet **these challenges**, teachers **must** ensure that their practice is research informed.
- 2) Teachers **may** need to develop additional skills when working in urban areas. This **could** involve skills around supporting children whose first language is not English.

- 3) **In conclusion**, there have been a number of recent high-profile cases of racial abuse of Muslims. While these **almost undoubtedly** involve a minority of pupils, they **clearly demonstrate** the need for a renewed commitment to inclusivity and engaging pupils with British values of mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith.
- 4) The **limited benefits** associated with the use of reading schemes **should be** weighed against the cost of providing them.
- 5) The authors **question** the effectiveness of many of the programmes that have recently been introduced to target EAL children.

Task, Identifying critical essay writing (Pages 51–56)

1) and 2) see below

This part of the essay title allows you to be descriptive. (Note the word 'outline'.)

Outline current practice in assessing children's acquisition of phonics skills and critically evaluate the extent to which these are effective for all children.

This part of the essay title demands that you are critical ('critically evaluate'). You cannot merely be descriptive here.

3) and 4) see below

Introduction

This essay will examine different methods of assessing children's phonic knowledge and will consider the principles of effective assessment in phonics and will show how formative assessment should be used to help teachers plan the next steps in teaching. The essay will also look at diagnostic assessment, including the phonics screening check which children take in Year 1, and will examine different approaches to learning to decode and ascertain whether:

- a) children are being taught these in school; and
- b) their abilities in these approaches are being assessed appropriately or, indeed, at all.

States key questions which will be explored.

Signpost for reader.

Before moving on to assessment, it is important to provide some context for the current situation by describing briefly the current government-backed preferred method of teaching early reading: systematic synthetic phonics (SSP).

Provides context.

Washtell (2010, p 44) defined SSP as '*an approach to the teaching of phonics which works by isolating the phonemes in a word. The phonemes are then blended together in sequence to decode the word.*' There tends to be a systematic approach

to the teaching of phonics, with letter, sound or grapheme–phoneme correspondences (GPCs) being introduced in a systematic and planned sequence. For example, in the DCSF's (2007) *Letters and Sounds* programme, *s, a, t, p, i* and *n* are introduced first and are then followed by *m, d, g, o, c, k* etc. Children are taught to 'synthesise' (hence the name synthetic phonics) the sounds to form words. This is the favoured approach in the national curriculum (2013) and has been the subject of much debate (see Wyse and Styles, 2007; Davis, 2013; Glazzard, 2017). SSP is the only subject knowledge element specifically required in the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011), with Standard 3 including the requirement: '*if teaching early reading, demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics*'. Therefore, it is in the context of a strong top-down emphasis on SSP that the ensuing discussion about assessment of phonics skills will be set.

Draws attention to the fact that this is a controversial topic.

Reminds reader of context and sets agenda for next sections.

Assessing children's acquisition of phonics skills

Rose (2006) maintained that effective assessment is '*simple, rigorous and purposeful*' (2006: para. 61). In a survey, *Removing Barriers to Literacy*, Ofsted (2011) maintained that it was important to '*teach phonics systematically as part of the teaching of reading and ensure that pupils' progress in developing their phonic knowledge and skills is regularly assessed*' (2011, p 8). Ofsted looked at schools which it identified as successful in teaching phonics and asserted that in such schools, '*the assessment of pupils' understanding of letters, sounds and words was frequent and record-keeping was meticulous*' (2011, para. 49).

The highly structured nature of many systematic synthetic phonics programmes lends itself to providing opportunities for regular and systematic assessment. For example, *Phonics Assessment and Tracking Guidance* (DCSF, 2009) provides assessment guidance which identifies a range of opportunities for assessment:

This can be during the discrete daily phonics session, but will also be apparent during shared guided and independent reading and writing sessions.

Writing samples provide useful evidence of children's phonic knowledge and ability to apply phonic skills, but evidence obtained through observation of children's approaches to reading unfamiliar words is of equal importance.

(DCSF, 2009 p 3)

However, while there may be little controversy over the use of ongoing formative assessment to monitor pupils' progress and to help teachers determine the next steps for individual children, there has been considerable debate about the use of the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. For example, one study found that while the screening check does identify children who may be falling behind, it does not provide teachers with any information which could not be found through commonly used assessments (University of Oxford, 2013). Other disadvantages included costs incurred and the tendency for schools to teach 'to the test'. Because the level of achievement required to pass the tests was set high, it was argued that this could place unnecessary pressure on young children and make parents and carers concerned.

Shows that author knows there is an issue to be critically analysed.

In 2012, a survey of nearly 3000 teachers, conducted after the administration of the check but before its results, reported that 87 per cent of respondents did not agree with the statutory implementation of the check and thought that it should be discontinued (ATL/NAHT/NUT, 2012). Duff et al (2012, p 11) argued that:

combining our observations about the integrity of the national phonics screening check data with our findings that teachers perform reliable and sensitive assessments of phonics progression, we argue in favour of using resources to continue to train and support teachers in the knowledge, assessment and teaching of early literacy skills.

Words like furthermore emphasise that there may be a series of issues.

{ Furthermore, Darnell et al (2017, p 505) questioned whether the testing of 85 grapheme–phoneme correspondences it is based on is effective. They maintained that:

The GPCs assessed, therefore, do not reflect the full range of GPCs that it is expected will be taught within a systematic synthetic phonics approach. Furthermore, children's ability to decode real words is dependent on their vocabulary knowledge, not just their phonic skills. These results question the purpose and validity of the phonics screening check and the role of synthetic phonics for teaching early reading.

Shows an appreciation of what the research has stated.

{ This illustrates a key point: that reading involves more than just phonics skills and that even within a phonics approach there are different strategies which readers use. These will be discussed later in this essay.

Makes it clear that the key points will be discussed.

Paragraph opener which indicates that this issue will be discussed further.

The inclusion of pseudo-words, or nonsense words, in the check has been controversial. Tal and Siegel (1996, p 224) maintain that *'the ability to decode pseudo-words indicates to what extent a child has mastered alphabetic mapping'*. Gibson and England (2016) argue that in some European languages such as German, where the correspondence between graphemes and phonemes is more straightforward, there was an advantage in reading nonsense words. However, English pronunciation can vary so that a pseudo-word such as 'jound' could be pronounced to rhyme with 'found' or 'wound' (when wound refers to an injury). Gibson and England assert that such alternatives are not accounted for in the marking guidance. Another problem can be pupils' accents, and although the guidance says that accent should be taken into account, a teacher may have a preference for Received Pronunciation and mark children down if they pronounce a word with a regional accent.

The government's own website describes the screening check as follows:

Section 1

- Page 1 Four pseudo-words
- Page 2 Four pseudo-words
- Page 3 Four pseudo-words
- Page 4 Four real words
- Page 5 Four real words

Section 2

- Page 6 Four pseudo-words
- Page 7 Four pseudo-words
- Page 8 Four real words
- Page 9 Four real words
- Page 10 Four real words

All pseudo-words in the check are accompanied by a picture of an imaginary creature. This provides a context for the child (naming the type of imaginary creature) to ensure that they are not trying to match the pseudo-word to a word in their vocabulary.

(Gov.uk, 2018)

Sets theoretical debate within the reality of school life.

While there continues to be debate about the use of pseudo-words, schools need to prepare children for a test which includes them. During my school placement in a Year 1 class, I witnessed a teacher adopting a different

Here the student identifies valuable points about accent and use of pseudo-words but doesn't build on them in terms of what it means for the current situation. Also, no ways forward are suggested. The problem is just stated instead of being interrogated and solutions offered.

Draws upon own experience to add another perspective and to show that the author understands the practical implications of teaching pseudo words.

approach to pseudo-words. Instead of getting the children to read nonsense words, she found lots of examples of place names which were phonically regular. She told the children that the words were the names of real places and that because they were special names they began with capital letters (capital letters are a feature of Year 1 subject knowledge). The teacher used names of towns and cities including *Tring, Diss, March, York, Hull, Leeds, Cardiff, Chard, Bridport* and *Ipswich* and was able to check children's ability to sound the phonemes and blend them to read whole words. The teacher explained that she needed to prepare the children for the phonics screening tests, but that she felt using place names was a much more meaningful and less confusing approach than using pseudo or nonsense words.

This paragraph lacks any research evidence to back up the teacher's practice. The idea runs the risk of being treated as unsubstantiated claims.

The effectiveness of assessment procedures for children of different abilities

Signposts for the reader.

{ We now turn to the issue of the effectiveness of assessment procedures for children of different abilities, with different learning needs and different approaches to learning to read. It is particularly interesting to note the conclusions of Glazzard in an article published in 2017, given that he is the co-author of a best-selling book on SSP:

} Indicates critical interpretation.

Different types of teaching and more comprehensive assessment batteries need to be developed to address different stages of development in reading. Given the inconclusive evidence in relation to synthetic phonics, an assessment tool which only assesses children's skills in this aspect of phonics, such as the phonics screening check, is not fit for purpose.

(Glazzard, 2017, pp 52–3)

Critical interpretation which emphasises that the author has both engaged with and interpreted two texts by the same author.

{ Even within their book on teaching SSP, Glazzard and Stokoe (2017) caution that the research underpinning the introduction of SSP, most notably the Clackmannanshire studies (Watson and Johnston, 1998; Johnston and Watson, 2005), were questionable in their methodology and findings. Glazzard and Stokoe go on to assert that analytic phonics has an '*important role to play in learning to read*' (p 60), since English includes many rimes (for example *-ight, -ing, -ack*) which appear in several words which can be learned together.

Davis (2012) draws attention to another aspect of reading which may challenge those whose learning focuses heavily on sound–symbol correspondences at the expense of context:

Indicates another perspective.

heteronyms. Davis points out that many words in English can be pronounced in different ways and that it is only when we see them in a sentence that we can be sure that our pronunciation is correct. He cites words including *tear*, *wind*, *rowing*, *leading*, *bass* and *minute* as examples.

However, in 2011, the government announced that it would provide matched funding for schools to purchase approved programmes for the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics and stated that these programmes must

...be designed for the teaching of discrete, daily sessions progressing from simple to more complex phonic knowledge and skills and covering the major grapheme/phoneme correspondences; demonstrate that phonemes should be blended, in order, from left to right, 'all through the word' for reading; ensure that as pupils move through the early stages of acquiring phonics, they are invited to practise by reading texts which are entirely decodable for them, so that they experience success and learn to rely on phonemic strategies.

(DfE, 2011)

Shows interpretation and criticality. Note the slightly tentative phrasing: it appears that...

It appears that phonics skills are understood by the government to be SSP, but there are other approaches which have been side-lined, even if they represent what most readers actually do, ie analytic, whole word and whole language approaches. In the next section, we will look at two other approaches to reading which, it will be argued, are deployed by readers to enable them to decode and comprehend text.

Analytical phonics

Analytical phonics involves a 'problem-solving' approach, as it encourages children to make links between patterns of sound found in words. For example, we know how to pronounce the word *light* so we can use our knowledge of the group of letters -ight to read an unfamiliar word like *driht*. Children learn to apply what they have learnt about the sounds in one word to other similar words. This might be termed analogy phonics; Brooks, (2003, p 11) describes analytic phonics as a method 'in which the phonemes associated with particular graphemes are not pronounced in isolation. Children identify (analyse) the common phoneme in a set of words in which each

word contains the phonemes under study'. This approach is currently out of favour, but it would seem to be a strategy which real readers use all the time. For example, when we see

The argument is meaningful but it is not supported by bringing in other research evidence about the same issue. Criticality means a clear and confident refusal to accept the conclusions of other writers without evaluating the arguments and evidence that they provide.

Paragraph opener sets the agenda for the paragraph to provide more detail.

Needs research evidence to support this point.

Tentative statement shows critical interpretation.

an unfamiliar place name on a road sign we may, if it is short, sound each grapheme with a corresponding phoneme to read the word, but for most words we probably make analogies with words and place names we already know in order to help us to read, for example Liverpool and Ullapool, Manchester and Dorchester.

The whole-word approach

This approach is often called the 'look and say' approach. Children are introduced to whole words through flash cards, often with accompanying pictures to link the word to its meaning. Children were taught to look carefully at words, noting their shapes and patterns, and to say the whole word. Accompanying reading schemes had incrementally more challenging vocabulary and the idea was that children would be able to read more advanced texts as their sight reading vocabulary increased. Some of these schemes also included attention to phonics, but many did not. Although, as advanced readers, we probably make considerable use of our sight vocabulary, we also need some phonic knowledge at a synthetic or analytic level when we meet an unfamiliar word.

Paragraph opener sets the agenda for the paragraph to provide more detail.

Phrases such as this show the author can draw conclusions.

{ It seems clear that while analytic and whole-word approaches may not be taught or tested in Key Stage 1 in English schools, these are strategies which real readers use.

Conclusion

This essay set out to outline current practice in assessing children's acquisition of phonics skills and to critically evaluate the extent to which these are effective for all children. It has been found that while teachers' ongoing assessment is central to successful teaching and learning, the phonics screening check has assumed a significant role in determining how teachers teach and children learn. The screening check has forced teachers who wish to see their pupils succeed to teach children to read pseudo words at a time when they are just getting to grips with real words and are beginning to enjoy reading for meaning. The screening check tests a narrow aspect of reading and does not take into account that real readers seek meaning and deploy other strategies besides breaking words into individual graphemes and sounding them out. I therefore concur with Glazzard's (2017, p 53) view that it is in fact, 'not fit for purpose'.

Strong verb use shows author's opinion.

Draws a strong conclusion, but there hasn't been enough engagement with other points of view to come to this conclusion.

Key concluding comment.

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Task Identifying opportunities for criticality (Page 56)

Introduction

- Define public and political perceptions. *descriptive*
- Give brief contextual background: changes to schools over last 30 or so years: national curriculum, literacy and numeracy strategies, Ofsted, local management, academies, free schools, governance, industrial action, workload. *descriptive*
- Identify key government interventions. *critical appraisal, eg what impact have they had and how they have been implemented and interpreted. Avoid being too descriptive here.*
- Explain how I intend to answer question. *signpost*

Main section

- How has the role of the teacher changed? *critically determine*
- Give examples of media coverage of teachers. *descriptive but also with critical appraisal of examples*
- Use Hansen article and research to illustrate changes over time; cite Everton et al on public perceptions of teachers. *critical element*
- Use case study of three teachers who have been teaching for over 30 years to exemplify (note the limitations of such a small-scale study). Do my findings accord with their experience? *critical element*

Summary/Conclusion

- Bring ideas together and summarise findings. *descriptive*
- Draw conclusions about changing perceptions of teachers. *evaluative summary*
- Discuss implications for the future of school education. *critical element*

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