

# Academic Writing 1

Post Graduate Diploma in Education - 2018-2019

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# Acknowledgement

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# Objectives

By the end of this presentation you should be able to:

- Identify the purposes of academic writing
- Identify the common types of academic writing
- Describe various formats of academic writing
- Adopt a position in anticipation of composing and elaborating upon an argument
- State what it means to identify and interrogate assumptions underlying declarations and claims
- Identify/point out common problematic approaches in using evidence in supporting an argument in academic writing

## Section 1

# Introduction to Academic Writing

# Academic Writing:

## What and why?

Most common reasons for academic writing include:

- to explore what can be investigated and what counts as evidence (Seunarinisingh, 2017)
- to report on a piece of research the writer has conducted
- to answer a question the writer has been given or chosen
- to discuss a subject of common interest and give the writer's view – participate in a community of discourse
- to synthesise research done by others on a topic

(Bailey, 2011)

# Academic writing: Some formats

(1) Short essays (including exam answers) generally have this pattern:

- Introduction
- Main body
- Conclusion

(2) Longer essays may include:

- Introduction
- Main body
- Literature review
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References
- Appendices

# Academic writing: Some formats

cont'd

(3) Dissertations and journal articles may have:

- Abstract
- List of contents
- Lists of tables and figures
- Introduction
- Literature review
- Methodology
- Findings
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Acknowledgements
- References
- Appendices

# Academic writing in the Dip Ed

- **Education Foundations and Issues in Education**

Assignment 1 - a REFLECTIVE ESSAY of 1000 words but which requires adherence to the conventions of good writing

Assignment 2 - an oral presentation based on an issue you and your peers deem important

NB. You MUST research an issue and cite your references

Assignment 3 - a traditional academic essay.

- **The Reflective Practitioner**

Action research report



# Expected output of the Dip. Ed. assignments

- Foundation essays require:
  - reflection on and interpretation of experience (yours and others) and locating your ideas, perspectives and practices within the context of larger academic conversations that exist in journals and books.
  - descriptions and analyses of actions, actors, institutions, policies, cultures, etc., which constitute an education system.
- Action research involves actual collection of data and writing up of an academic report.

## Section 2

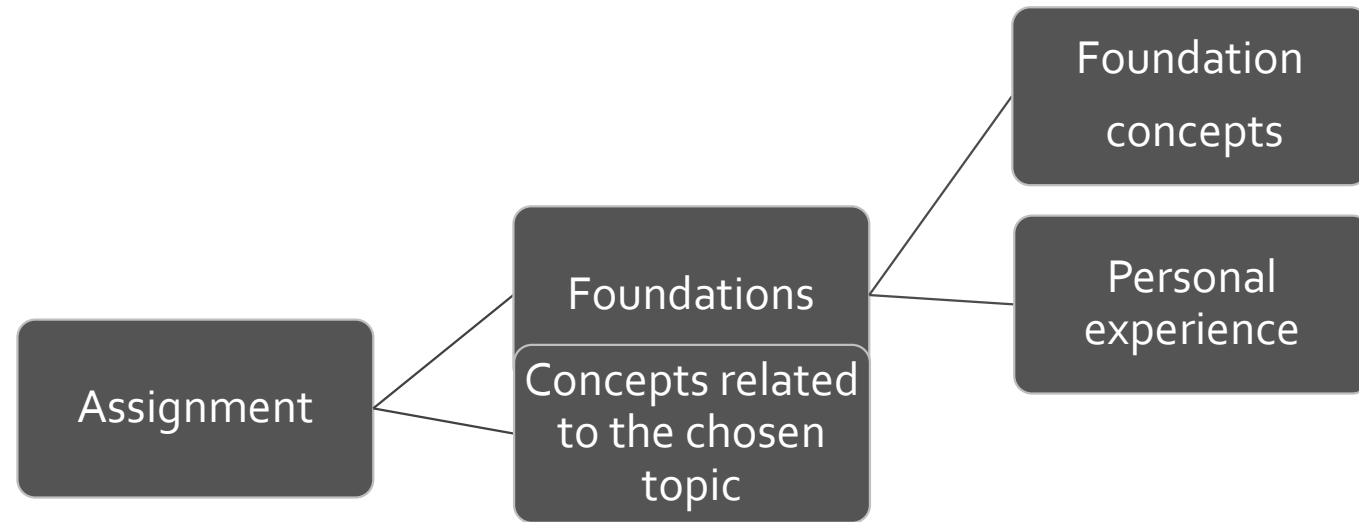
# Argument as a core skill in academic writing

## Making my point

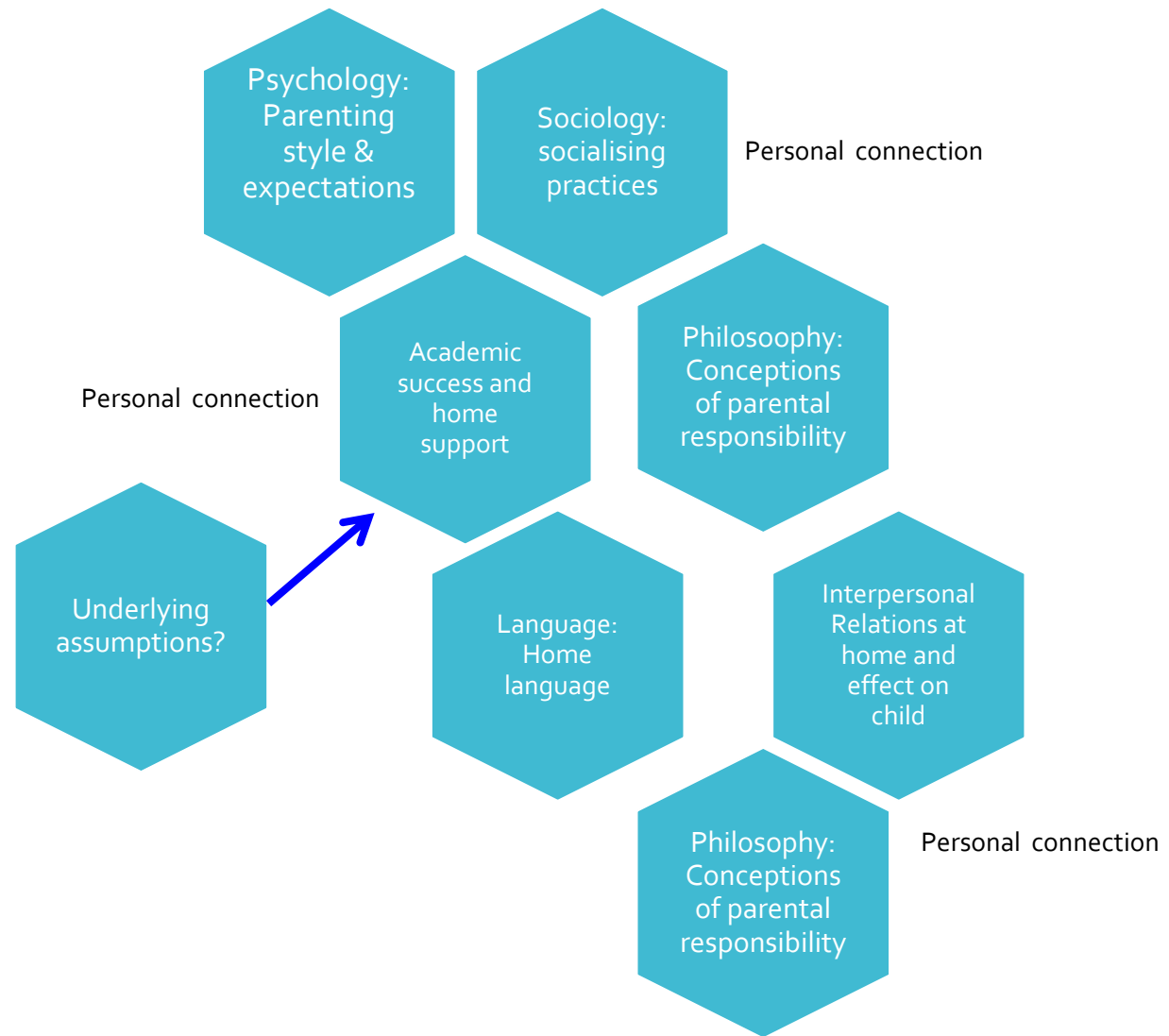
- Children who succeed at school have supportive home environments
- What's my perspective?
- How to 'prove it' ?

# Making my point

What kind of evidence am I looking for?



# How this works out



## Practice

- How motivational is homework that teachers give their students?
- Write about 6-8 lines stating your opinion.

# Identifying assumptions

What assumptions underlie the statement/declaration below?

*Children who succeed at school have supportive home environments*

We may assume that

- Only children with home support succeed at school
- Homes have special characteristics that support ....

# Identifying assumptions

cont'd

Suppose the declaration were stated in this way?

*SOME/MOST children who succeed at school have supportive  
home environments*

You have made a 'hedged' declaration.

- How have the assumptions changed?
- What assumptions might you hold now?



# Identifying and interrogating assumptions

## Here is another example

Social and emotional learning is described as “the missing piece in efforts to reach the array of goals associated with improving schooling” (Elias, et al. 1997). Discuss.

*Consider the following:*

- Define social and emotional learning.
- Why is it important? What form does it take?
- Look at the phrase “missing piece”.
- What does it assume?
  - that other approaches are incomplete.
  - that it is a perfect completion piece
  - that after it is in place the plan is complete.
- What is meant by improving schooling? For whom? What does it assume?
  - that there is room to get better.
- Are there other competing ways of getting school improvement?
- Why try to improve schooling? What are the ultimate goals of such improvement? Which foundation concepts are you using here?
- What is SEL? How is it being positioned as a solution to educational problems? How suitable is it? Why? What goals will it help educators to achieve? Which foundation concepts are you using here?

# Identifying and interrogating assumptions - Practice

Look at the statements below and determine what assumptions are being made.

Given the diversity of learners in secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago, critically assess how teachers and administrators in your school should adjust their practice to optimally cater to such learners.

How motivational is homework that teachers give their students?

## Assumptions about context

Some research is based on assumptions about a different culture and have implications for the generalisability of the practices in that culture or context to T&T context

## Where to deal with assumptions?

You have choices.

Treating underlying assumptions can be done

- completely at the start of your essay, or
- you may treat them individually as the need arises in your argument.

## Section 3

# Framing Your Argument

Where's the  
Proof?

A declaration is nothing  
but an unwarranted claim  
if it is not supported with  
evidence.

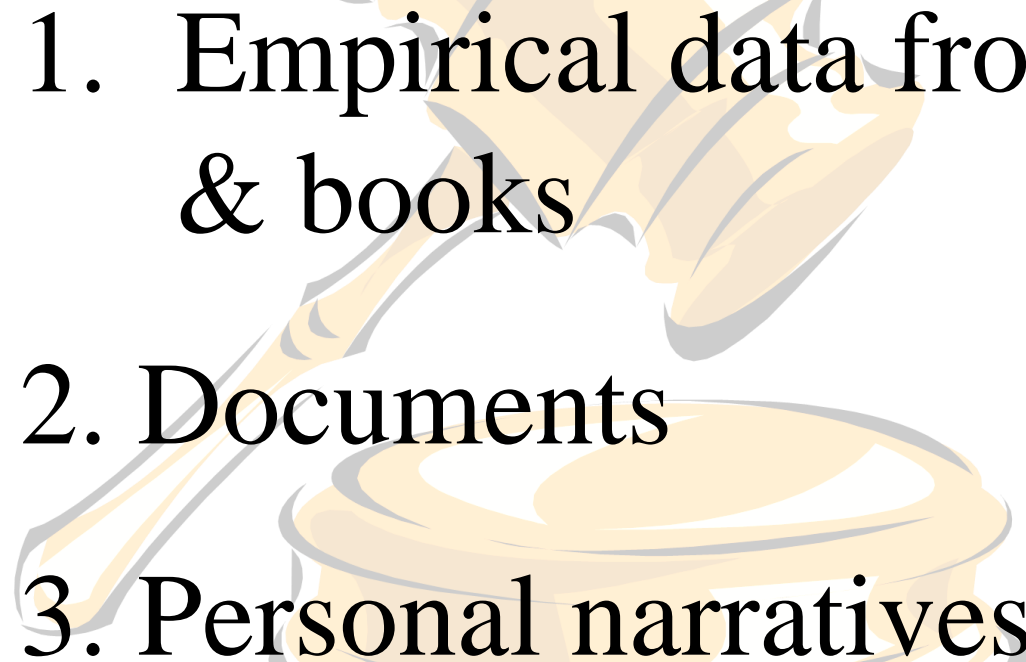
## A Basic Rule

A basic rule is to ask, “What am I claiming here?”

Then gather evidence to support the claim.

What  
Counts As  
Evidence?

Sources of evidence for the  
Foundation paper:

1. Empirical data from journals  
& books
  2. Documents
  3. Personal narratives
- 



## Some Extremes

Some students veer between either of 2 extremes:

- some make claims without providing supporting evidence;
- others present only what they have read, like a catalog of facts, and make no attempt to interpret and apply it.

A word to the  
wise

Search for evidence if you want  
an empirical base to your opinion.

What  
(Not) To  
Do With  
Evidence

Don't be a,

❖ Compiler

❖ Journalist

❖ Politician



## Compilers

Flood the reader with evidence that they have read.

However, **they quote** hundreds of words **without analysing** what they are presenting.

## Journalists

Take the ‘He said..., she said...’ approach.

**Ask yourself:** what do I have to say about the matter?

**Where’s the perspective?**

What’s your voice?

Politicians

Engage in declamations,  
accusations and criticisms.

**But**, where's the **evidence**  
to support the claims you  
make?

# Searching the literature

A key source: School of Education Library

- UWILinC
- Ebscohost
- Proquest
- OCLC First search

What are the  
basic  
expectations  
of readers of  
academic  
writing?

“We want [academic] writers who manifest orderly thought processes in their writing, who can organize data for analysis, who can be selective, who can distinguish significant detail from just detail, who can measure length in relation to importance, who can analyze, sort out, discern, discriminate, and discard.”

Klein, 1965 (in Monipally & Pawar, 2010)



## Where next?

- In our next presentation ,we consider some of the key characteristics of academic writing which you should exhibit.
- We will also take a closer look at issues such as audience as you attempt to communicate your ideas to your reader, voice, plagiarism, and referencing.

## Some helpful references

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