International Journal of Education & the Arts

http://www.ijea.org/ **ISSN: 1529-8094**

Volume 25 Number 17 **August 12, 2024**

Constructing Educational Criticism: Methodological Considerations, Procedures, and Evaluative Criteria

Ali Nouri
Malayer University, Iran

Citation: Nouri, A. (2024). Constructing educational criticism: Methodological considerations, procedures, and evaluative criteria. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, *25*(17). http://doi.org/10.26209/ijea25n17

Abstract

Since the 1950s, educational literature has explored the potential of translating art criticism into classroom practices. This eventually led to the emergence of educational criticism as a distinctive form of inquiry in the 1970s. However, despite its potential for exploring educational experiences and evaluating educational programs, educational criticism remains a relatively underutilized research method within the education community. It is hypothesized that educational researchers are not adequately equipped with the specialized knowledge and technical skills required for constructing an educational criticism. Based on this understanding, this paper aims to clarify what educational criticism is, how it can be used, and what criteria should be used to evaluate its quality. Methodologically, educational criticism is a type of arts-based educational inquiry that is conducted to understand and explore the characteristics, meaning, and/or value of an educational event. Researchers employing this method act as educational connoisseurs who employ the art of criticism to make public their observations of educational practices. These observations are organized through four interrelated features: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematic analysis. To ensure the trustworthiness of educational criticism, scholars have proposed four core criteria: structural corroboration, consensual validation, referential adequacy, and instrumental utility. This analytical framework enables educational researchers to utilize educational criticism as a tool for exploring educational experiences and evaluating educational practices.

Introduction

Educational connoisseurship and criticism, which is referred to as educational criticism in this paper, is an innovative form of educational research developed and characterized by Eliot Eisner, a leading scholar of arts education who sedulously strove to illuminate the significant contribution of the arts in the practices of curriculum and pedagogy. The methodology introduced by Eisner in 1976 was immediately employed by his graduate students at Stanford University (Barone, 1983; McCutcheon, 1976; Singer, 1991; Taylor, 1993; Vallance, 1977). Since then, several researchers have employed this method for research purposes in self-reflexive ways, aiming to reveal the unique qualities of educational life that cannot be explored through other research approaches. (see, for example, Anderson, 2012; Armon, 1997; Austin & Stanley, 2022; Barone, 2000; Conn, 2015; Conrad, 2011; Crowley, 1996; Epstein, 1989; Ergin, 2021; Frederick, 2010; Greene, 2016; Heywood, 2009; Ingman, 2013; Keys, 2003; Khanipoor et al., 2017; Knowlton, 1984; Kramer, 2010; Mahovsky, 2018; Mitchell, 2016; Moroye, 2005; Murrihy, 2009; Nouri & Farsi, 2018; Stueck, 1991; K. Thompson, 2005; M. J. Thompson, 2019; Turino, 2014; Zhang et al., 2021)

Eisner's educational criticism model has sometimes been criticized due to a lack of methodological rigor (Glatthorn & Glatthorn, 2012). In response to such objections, proponents of the model have emphasized that their epistemological intentions were misunderstood (Barone, 2010; Barone & Eisner, 1997; Flinders & Eisner, 1994; Hanson, 2018). They contend that Eisner has indeed addressed the methodological rigor concerns and has outlined standards for evaluating the credibility of educational criticism in his writings, such as *Educational Imagination* (1994a) and *The Enlightened Eye* (1991). However, it is widely accepted that educational criticism cannot be effectively employed by novice educational researchers. For instance, Daniel Stufflebeam (2001), a pioneering figure in the development of the field of educational evaluation, describes educational criticism as a very useful theory but not necessarily a practical model. He stated, "This approach depends on the chosen expert's qualifications. It also requires an audience that has confidence in and is willing to accept and use the connoisseur's report. I would willingly accept and use any evaluation that Dr. Elliott Eisner agreed to present, but there are not many Eisners out there" (p. 36). Similarly, Glatthorn & Glatthorn (2012) argued that the use of this model demands a great deal of expertise and experience, noting the seeming elitism implied in the term connoisseurship. Eisner himself admitted that "It is very difficult for an unskilled writer to reveal the qualities of classroom life in narrative" (Eisner, 1991, p. 132).

Taken together, educational criticism has not been widely used by the educational community for two primary reasons. First, educational criticism, as a context-specific study, produces conclusions with a limited degree of generalizability to other settings, which further limits its practical utility. Second, using educational criticism to investigate an educational practice is a

difficult task and requires a high level of competence and expertise, thereby limiting its usability. These limitations, however, can be overcome by clarifying the bases and principles of educational criticism to the educational community and adequately equipping researchers with the specialized knowledge and technical skills required for constructing an educational criticism (see Zeph, 1985). To achieve this goal, the present review focuses on methodological considerations, procedural guidelines, and evaluative criteria for constructing educational criticism. The intention is to provide an analytic framework for utilizing the potential of this form of inquiry in studying educational phenomena.

Methodological Considerations

Eisner (1991) describes educational criticism as part of a tradition that has long flourished in the arts and humanities, in philosophy, and later in the social sciences. According to Eisner, the theoretical forebears of criticism can be found in Aristotle's deep appreciation for the practical vicissitudes of life in his *Ethics*, and later in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and his anthropological writings, as well as the work of Karl Marx, who provided the modern world with the most influential critique of socioeconomic systems. This tradition is evident in the work of writers such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Hannah Arendt, Erich Fromm, Michel Foucault, and Bruno Bettelheim, who have significantly contributed to our perception and understanding of the social world. It is also rooted in John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934), particularly in his chapter titled "Criticism and Perception."

Dewey's recognition of the significant role of art experiences in child development was soon echoed by Herbert Read and disseminated through his influential work, "*Education through Art*" (1943). This book has become the standard text in art education, firmly establishing Read as a pioneer in the field. However, this tradition did not occupy a significant place in the methodology of educational research until the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed, interest in applying art criticism to classroom practice emerged in the educational literature during the curriculum reform movement of the 1950s and '60s (Geahigan, 2000). For instance, Philip Jackson's *Life in Classrooms* (1968) is a seminal work in the field of education that explores the social dynamics and interactions within classrooms. Jackson used artistic tools, such as metaphors, to describe the classroom environment and the relationships between students and teachers. However, the term "educational criticism," as an arts-inspired educational practice was conceptualized and emerged during the 1970s and was further developed in the 1990s by Eliot Eisner (Eisner, 1976; 1991, 1994a).

Eisner and a growing number of his followers (Anderson, 1993; Barone & Eisner, 2006; Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2017; Feldman, 1996; Tian, 2023; Wolff & Geahigan, 1997) strongly believe that educational issues are artistic in nature and that the arts, along with science and philosophy, could significantly inform educational research. Consequently, they

have explored the possibilities of research approaches that were deeply rooted in the arts. Their argument centers on the idea that there exist many invisible yet valuable educational qualities that can be identified and revealed through arts-based educational inquiry, including educational criticism (Eisner, 1991, 1994a; Harb, 2018). This perspective aligns with Eisner's theory of cognition, known as "cognitive pluralism" (1994a; 1994b), which posits that educational practice can benefit from using various artistic modalities as ways of knowing and representing knowledge. Accordingly, the arts evoke multiple sensory perceptions, emotional responses, and intellectual insights, thus enabling us to see and perceive the world from different perspectives and appreciate the diversity of human experience (Greenwood, 2019). As Eisner (2002) noted, each art modality provides another way of engaging with the world: to experience, to understand, and to express and represent meaning. Moreover, each modality can enhance the educational perspectives of the audience by effectively conveying the subtle and rich dimensions of school experiences that are often challenging to express in words (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Eisner, 1997a; 1997b). Therefore, these artistic modalities should be considered as alternative forms of language or families of languages within educational research (Feldman, 1982).

Educational criticism, rooted in the arts and specifically in art criticism, has undergone development and refinement within the field of education, particularly in the context of educational evaluation. Educational specialists have developed various evaluation methods and models for use in educational settings. Among these are Tyler's objectives-oriented model (1949), Scriven's Goal-Free Evaluation (1972), Stufflebeam's context, input, process, and product (CIPP) evaluation model (2003), Stake's responsive evaluation (2003), Guba's constructivist, naturalistic evaluation (1989), Patton's utilization-focused evaluation (2002), and Fetterman & Wandersman's empowerment evaluation (2005).

Drawing from his extensive background as both a curriculum expert and an artist, Eisner employed the analogy of art criticism to propose an alternative perspective on evaluation (Alkin, 2012). This notion that Eisner developed was previously considered in earlier work done by John Mann (1969), Ian Westbury (1970), and Edward Kelly (1973) when they were analyzing the analogy between literary criticism and curriculum evaluation. Mann (1969) coined the term "curriculum criticism," arguing that the curriculum could be viewed as a literary object. In his review of curriculum evaluation, Westbury (1970) emphasized the potential benefits of incorporating concepts, methodologies, and strategies from other fields, particularly literary criticism, into educational evaluation. Kelly (1973) furthered the analogy by highlighting how literary concepts—such as metaphor, point of view, plot, and theme—could be effectively applied to curriculum evaluation.

Although Eisner was not the first to recognize the arts' potential benefits to educational research and evaluation, his original contribution to this endeavor was the development of a methodology called "educational criticism." Initially, Eisner labeled his educational criticism as a specific type of 'qualitative inquiry' (e.g., Eisner, 1991; Flinders & Eisner, 1994a). However, in later works, he expanded its scope beyond qualitative research, redefining it as an 'arts-based educational inquiry.' This approach is now recognized as one of the three categories within 'arts-based inquiry' in education (Barone & Eisner, 2006). The arts-based educational inquiry must be differentiated from scientific educational research, which is commonly classified into three distinct approaches: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Braund & Reiss, 2019). Table 1 summarizes some of the main differing characteristics between arts-based and science-based research in education. It should be noted that the methods outlined in Table 1 are only examples of many possible methods.

Table 1.

A summary of the main differing characteristics of arts-based and science-based research approaches in education

	Quantitative research	**Qualitative study**	**Arts-based inquiry**
Methodological Paradigm	**Positivism/post-positivism**	**Social constructivism**	**Cognitive pluralism**
Definition	-The process of testing theories and hypotheses through the systematic use of statistical and mathematical models	-The process of constructing an in-depth understanding of phenomena within their natural setting	-The process of understanding experience through the systematic use of the artistic process, concepts, techniques, and practice
Purpose	**-To identify statistical relationships, causes and effects**	**-To explore concepts, features, and patterns**	**-To suggest new ways of viewing phenomena**
Methods	○ Experimental ○ Single-subject correlational ○ Causal-comparative ○ Quantitative survey ○ meta-analysis ○ Quantitative content analysis	• Historical • Phenomenology • Case study • Narrative • Ethnography Phenomenography • Grounded theory • Qualitative content analysis • Research Synthesis • Comparative studies • Qualitative survey	▪ Narrative construction and storytelling ▪ Nonliterary forms of arts-based research ▪ educational connoisseurship and criticism

Arts-based inquiry is a research approach that involves understanding and examining experience through the systematic use of the artistic processes, concepts, techniques, and practices (McNiff, 2008). It differs from qualitative research, which involves constructing a complex and holistic picture of experience through conducting the study in natural settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As Forrest (2007) rightly noted, artwork can serve as the raw data for social science research, as it does in some phenomenological studies and the sociology of art. However, arts-based inquiry is conceptualized as a family of research methodologies inspired by the arts and the aesthetic foundations of education.

Arts-based inquiry should be distinguished from research activities where the arts may play a significant role but are essentially used as complementary sources of data (McNiff, 2008). Indeed, some scholars have recognized arts-based inquiry as an innovative approach, distinct from traditional qualitative methodology (see Chilton & Leavy, 2014; Gerber et al., 2012; Neilsen, 2004; Leavy, 2017). The key distinctions between arts-based inquiry and other educational research lie in their purposes. While conventional educational research aims to attain knowledge that is highly valid and reliable—truthful and trustworthy as possible—arts-based educational research seeks to propose new ways of viewing educational phenomena (Barone and Eisner, 2006). In essence, arts-based inquiry requires a novel worldview and covers expansive terrain (Chilton & Leavy, 2014; Leavy, 2017).

Taken together, as Barone (2008) eloquently articulates, arts-based research in education is not a substitution for quantitative or even forms of qualitative methods. Instead, it emerges as a distinct way of seeing, knowing, perceiving, and understanding the world. Barone and Eisner (2006) identified three types of arts-based educational research: "genres of narrative construction and storytelling," "nonliterary forms of arts-based research," and "educational connoisseurship and criticism." Narrative construction and storytelling are genres that encompass a wide range of literary forms, including "poems," "novels," "short stories," "life stories," "autobiographies" and even "fiction." Nonliterary forms of arts-based research are alternative modes of representing research data and may include "painting," "photography," "collage," "music," "video," "sculpture," "film," and even "dance" (Barone & Eisner, 2006).

The third kind of arts-based educational inquiry is educational connoisseurship and criticism, a research methodology and evaluation model rooted in art criticism. It relies on the researcher's ability to disclose qualities of educational events in much the same way that an art critic studies a painting or symphonic work (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Eisner, 1991; 2002; 2004). It should be noted that, as Eisner (2005) explains, educational researchers should avoid "methodological monism." Each educational research approach has its advantages depending on the research objectives and provides a unique perspective on the situations that the

researcher seeks to understand. Therefore, it is important to address educational problems by employing "multiple methodologies" to address a greater range of research problems.

Procedure

Educational researchers engaged in educational criticism are connoisseurs and critics of educational events and practices. Like critics of the arts, educational critics help others in seeing, understanding, and judging various facets of education, including curriculum development, teaching methodologies, assessment practices, and educational policies. To achieve this objective, they must be skilled in both the art of "appreciating" (connoisseurship) and the art of "disclosing" (criticism) (Eisner, 1991; 2005, p. 49). In this sense, the concepts of educational connoisseurship and educational criticism are two halves of a pair of concepts that complement each other (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Eisner, 1991; 2005). In sum, educational connoisseurship and educational criticism represent two modes through which we come to understand and represent the qualities of the educational experiences of students and teachers (Eisner, 2005). Engaging with poetry, novels, and fiction, as well as participating in music or dance classes and other artistic endeavors can indeed enhance the critical acumen of educational researchers. By immersing themselves in diverse forms of expression, they develop the capacity to recognize subtle qualities within educational contexts. Just as an experienced art critic uncovers hidden layers in a painting, educational critics unravel the complexities of curriculum, teaching methods, and educational policies.

Educational critics must be aware of the seven key features identified by Barone and Eisner (1997) that constitute arts-based educational inquiry. These features include the "creation of a virtual reality," "the presence of ambiguity," "use of expressive language," "use of contextualized and vernacular language," "the promotion of empathy," "the personal signature of the writer," and "the presence of aesthetic form". These seven important features serve as guiding principles for perception and should be taken into account by educational connoisseurs when describing, interpreting, and evaluating educational phenomena (Eisner, 1991). Considering this set of features, the product of educational criticism can be organized into four interrelated dimensions: 'description,' 'interpretation,' 'evaluation,' and 'thematics' (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Eisner, 1991, 1994a; Flinders & Eisner, 1994), as outlined in Table 2.

Description is the result of perception and observation without interpretation and value judgment. Unlike traditional modes of description, propositions may be less appropriate for characterizing certain aspects of a situation (Barone & Eisner, 2006). In such a disclosure, educational critics are more likely to employ nondiscursive language that can be metaphorical, connotative, and symbolic (Glatthorn & Glatthorn, 2012). Through narrative, often with a

literary tone, educational critics endeavor to express the essential and often subtle aspects of the situation (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Uhrmacher, 1993).

The second dimension of educational criticism is interpretation. It involves explaining the described meaning based on theoretical background and empirical evidence to identify the most appropriate criteria for value judgment (Barone & Eisner, 2006). According to Eisner (1991), "if description deals with what is, interpretation focuses upon why or how" (p. 89). The educational critic uses ideas, models, and theories from the arts, humanities, or social sciences to penetrate the surface and address deeper issues and meanings to provide the reader with the means for understanding what has been described. Hence, it is through interpretation that educational critics derive the basis for value judgments (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Uhrmacher, 1993).

A third aspect of educational criticism is the evaluative dimension, or making value judgments. In this context, evaluation is the process of asseesing the quality of the observed situation concerning educational significance (Barone & Eisner, 2006). According to Eisner (1991), making value judgments about the educational import of what has been seen and rendered is one of the critical features of educational criticism. Indeed, there can be no evaluations without value judgments. However, the program evaluator must judge the worth of an educational program studied, just as the art critic assesses the value of the work he or she critiqued (Donmoyer, 2014).

While the goal of educational criticism is not to generalize, it often (although not always) culminates with a thematic demotion that helps the researcher to identify what is general in what is particular (Barone & Eisner, 2006). This is what Stake (1995) refers to as "naturalistic generalization." It is possible, because "every classroom, school, teacher, student, book, or building displays not only itself, but features it has in common with other classrooms, schools, teachers, books, and buildings' (Eisner, 1991, p. 103). The thematic, indeed, is a communal endeavor towards identifying dominant features or pervasive qualities of the observed situation through various forms of representation (Eisner, 1991; Vars, 2002). It is one of the major functions of criticism providing the content through which readers of different studies can compare and contrast competing interpretations of the same problem and, consequently, deepen their understanding of its multiple layers (Eisner, 1991).

The four aspects of educational criticism proposed by Eisner are similar to the four stages that Feldman (1970) presented for his "art criticism" model. The first phase of Feldman's version of art criticism is known as the "description stage," through which group members describe all the individual elements of artwork they collectively observe. The second phase is referred to as the "analysis stage" which involves noting the relationships between the different elements

of the work described during the description stage. The third phase of the process is the "interpretation stage," which allows critics to make meaning of all earlier observations through discussion and debate, leading to a group consensus about the artwork's meaning. The fourth phase in Feldman's group process approach to art criticism is known as the "judgment stage." This final phase of the process is about the group's judgment of the worth of the artwork based on the work done by group members and the insights they gained during the earlier phases (see Donmoyer, 2014; Feldman, 1970).

Table 2.

The key dimensions of educational criticism (Based on Eisner's conceptualization, 1991)

Key dimensions	What does an educational critic do?
Description	▪ The educational critic describes the situation in a way that enables readers to imagine what an educational event, practice, or process is like and understand how it would feel and appear if they were there.
Interpretation	▪ The educational critic explains the meaning and significance of the described observations by illuminating potential consequences and providing supporting reasons and evidence.
Evaluation	▪ The educational critic makes value judgments about the merit or educational worth of the described or interpreted subject of the criticism.
Thematics	▪ The educational critic provides a summary of the essential features that have in common with other situations and contains messages that can be applied to guide future educational practices.

Data Collection, Analysis and Presentation

As with other research methodologies, data for educational criticism can be drawn from various forms of representation and diverse sources, including (but not limited to) observations, interviews, artifacts, documents, and visual materials such as photographs and videos. As Eisner (1991) pointed out, visual media possess enormous potential. These materials allow researchers to observe scenes and provide raw material for interpretation and analysis. From this data, educational critics construct narratives or portraits that capture their experiences and understanding within learning settings—a type of narrative often overlooked in traditional educational research (Mitchell, 2016).

Designing arts-based research for analyzing data can indeed be both interesting and challenging (Magennis & Knipe, 2018). Depending on the research purpose and design, researchers have the flexibility to create their own framework for data analysis. During this process, researchers seek plausible conclusions by constructing coherent narratives, making insightful observations, and applying logical reasoning (Eisner, 1991; Tian, 2023). Thus, it is possible to use qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis, and thematic analysis to represent the various types of data (such as pictures, narratives, documents, audio, videos, and artifacts) in chosen information units (Eisner, 1991; Magennis & Knipe, 2018; Tian, 2023).

After collecting and analyzing their data, educational critics move on to presenting their findings. Arts-based educational texts differ significantly from traditional research texts in terms of language style and format. Educational critics need to employ literary language that is expressive and connotative, such as metaphors when describing, interpreting, and evaluating the qualities perceived in a situation (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Eisner, 1991). However, this does not imply that numbers have no role in educational criticism. Educational critics can and should use frequencies, percentages, and other statistical descriptions if the phenomena are best addressed by such measures (Eisner, 1991). Additionally, while traditional research texts is highly standardized, the formats of arts-based educational research tend to be much less conventional. They often employ formats associated with poetry, critical essays, plays, novels, biographies or autobiographies, and collections of life stories (Barone & Eisner, 2006).

Evaluating Criteria

Educational critics need to address the issue of trustworthiness and ensure that the processes and products of their inquiry are valid and usable for educators, policy makers, and other researchers. With this goal in mind, borrowing the term “credibility” from qualitative research, Eisner proposed four criteria to demonstrate the trustworthiness of educational criticism studies. These criteria are: “structural corroboration,” “consensual validation,” “referential adequacy,” and “instrumental utility” (Eisner, 1991, 1994a; also see Nouri & Farsi, 2018; K. Thompson, 2005), as outlined in Table 3.

The first evaluative criterion, structural corroboration, pertains to the researcher’s ability to establish a comprehensive and cohesive description by interrelating multiple sources of evidence. This process serves to validate and reinforce the overall interpretation and evaluation. A key strategy for achieving structural corroboration is the utilization of multiple data sources, which collectively contribute to a robust and interconnected understanding. Eisner (1991) emphasized the importance of seeking a confluence of evidence “that allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations, and conclusions” (p. 110). In essence, structural corroboration involves assembling information in a manner that mutually supports

and substantiates each component, resulting in a cohesive whole. All constituent pieces must align and validate one another to be deemed structurally corroborative (Eisner, 1994a).

The second evaluative criterion, consensual validation, is defined as an "agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics of an educational situation are right" (Eisner, 1991, p. 112). More specifically, readers find the work persuasive based on the cogency of the argument, the internal coherence, and the personal signature of the critic (Eisner, 1991). Consensual validation is achieved when qualified others affirm the educational critic's observations, analysis, and conclusions. Researchers refine consensual validity by deliberately incorporating multiple types of data, while also considering disconfirming evidence and contradictory interpretations or appraisals (Eisner, 1991).

Referential adequacy is the third main evaluative criterion for educational criticism. It refers to the ability of the criticism to accurately represent the qualities of the educational setting being analyzed. This means that the work should provide a clear and accurate description of the context, processes, and outcomes of educational practices in a natural setting. Research is referentially adequate, "when readers can see what they would have missed without the critic's observations" (Eisner, 1991, p. 114). Thus, referential adequacy is achieved when the qualities identified by a critic are not only persuasive within the research context but also convincing in real-world educational settings. This implies that the findings and recommendations of a study should be applicable and relevant to actual educational practices and policies (Eisner, 1991; Zeph, 1985).

The fourth evaluative criterion, instrumental utility, pertains to "the extent to which the research is seen as having value for practitioners and applicability to practice" (Geelan, 2007, p. 33). Instrumental utility in educational criticism aligns with the concept of generalization commonly found in scientific educational research. While Eisner (1991) acknowledged that the idea of applying generalizations to practice has some problematic features, he argued that "if we are unable to use what we learn, learning has no instrumental utility" (p. 174). This criterion signifies that the insights derived from an inquiry should extend beyond the specific context in which they originated, finding practical application in broader educational settings (Eisner, 1991).

Table 3.

Trustworthiness criteria in educational criticism

Criteria	Strategy employed
Structural corroboration	▪ When multiple sources of evidence support and validate one another.
Consensual validation	▪ When qualified others agree or validate the educational critic's observations, analysis, and conclusions.
Referential adequacy	▪ When the qualities identified by a critic are not only persuasive within the research context but also convincing in real-world educational settings.
Instrumental utility	▪ When the conclusions drawn from the criticism have practical value for practitioners and can inform their policies and practices.

In addition to the above four criteria described by Eisner for assessing the quality of educational criticism, Barone and Eisner (2006) emphasize evaluating arts-based inquiry, including educational criticism, by its consequences. They highlight three key criteria for evaluating educational criticism: illuminating effect, generativity, and incisiveness. Accordingly, a piece of educational criticism can be judged by its "illuminating" effect (its ability to reveal previously unnoticed aspects), its "generativity" (its ability to stimulate new questions), and its "incisiveness" (its ability to focus on educationally salient issues and questions).

Concluding Remarks

Traditionally, art education has focused primarily on developing technical skills, such as drawing and painting. However, recent decades have witnessed a growing recognition of art's potential to cultivate cognitive functions beyond technical abilities. Efland (2002) highlights the significance of art in fostering creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. This burgeoning understanding has prompted educators to explore how artistic knowledge can inform educational theory and practice. One specific example of this growing trend is the adaptation of art criticism principles for educational inquiry. This perspective has led to the development of educational criticism, an evolving genre of arts-based inquiry with significant promise. However, educational criticism needs to transition from theory to practice with more attention on the merits of this form of inquiry in examining educational issues. Building on this understanding, this paper presents an analytical framework designed to strengthen the education community's confidence of the efficacy of educational criticism and its potential benefits. This analytical framework aims to enable educational researchers to utilize

educational criticism both as a research method and as a model for evaluating educational practices.

This paper began with an overview of the historical context that shaped the development and evolution of educational criticism. Building on a rich history, educational criticism has deep roots in both art criticism and educational evaluation. The discussion then shifted the methodological foundation of educational criticism, suggesting that educational criticism may not be a distinct method within the qualitative approach, but rather a genre of arts-based educational inquiry. Stemming from the tenets and principles of cognitive pluralism (Eisner, 1994a; 1994b), arts-based educational inquiry utilizes artistic processes, approaches, tools, and techniques to describe, analyze, criticize, and even generate educational thought, practices, and programs. While the primary focus of this paper was not on the other two types of educational arts-based research (i.e., genres of narrative construction and storytelling, and nonliterary forms), these areas also offer valuable insights into educational contexts, similarly to educational criticism. Future research could further explore and clarify their methodologies, contributing to the field of arts-based educational research.

After providing an overview of the methodological foundations of educational criticism, the paper shifted focus to the researcher's role in this type of inquiry. As Eisner (1991; 1994a) suggests, educational researchers engaging in educational criticism must embody a dual perspective. They act as both "connoisseurs," possessing the ability to perceive and appreciate the subtle qualities of school life, and "critics," vividly presenting these qualities through artful critical disclosure (Eisner, 1976). As Pinar et al (1995) state, "connoisseurship is a private act of appreciation. When the connoisseur becomes a critic, he or she makes his private act public" (p. 583).

The next part of the paper was dedicated to the procedures and processes involved in conducting educational criticism. Drawing on the key features that guide arts-based educational inquiry (Barone & Eisner, 2006), educational criticism is structured around four interrelated dimensions: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. By employing these processes, educational criticism sheds light on the qualitative aspects, meanings, and significance of an educational situation. As Uhrmacher et al. (2017) posit, this framework allows researchers to "focus on the perception of qualities, interpreting their significance, and appraising their value, all toward educational ends" (p. 22).

The review then provided a brief overview of data collection and analysis in educational criticism. Educational critics should aim to disseminate the process and products of their research to a broader audience, thereby creating a more immediate and lasting impact. They thus need to employ multiple sources of data and multiple forms of representation. While

observations and interviews can be rich sources of information for educational critics, other data sources can also contribute to understanding and revealing the dynamics of educational situations. For example, sharing a poem or a series of photographic images may be more effective in communicating research findings to a group of students or teachers than sharing a lengthy research article or book-length manuscript (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2013).

It is worth noting that arts-based educational researchers can benefit from fictional writing as a research method (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Spindler, 2008). While some dissertations in the field of education have been published in the form of fictionalized narratives (see Barone & Eisner, 2006), this arts-based method remains relatively unfamiliar to many educational researchers. However, by crafting fictional writing as part of a research project, researchers can not only engage the audience in a novel and compelling way but also bring complex educational concepts to life with greater emotional depth and insight.

The final section of the paper explored the standards for credibility, a cornerstone of effective educational criticism. Accordingly, four criteria were discussed by which educational criticism establishes its credibility. These include consensual validation, structural corroboration, referential adequacy, and instrumental utility.

Educational criticism undoubtedly enriches our understanding of educational experiences, firmly anchoring itself within the diverse landscape of arts-based educational research. However, to fully unlock its potential, nurturing cross-disciplinary collaborations between educators and artists becomes imperative. This convergence of perspectives can lead to even more innovative and impactful forms of inquiry. It's essential to acknowledge that methodological pluralism, spanning a wide spectrum from scientific studies to philosophical investigations to arts-based inquiry, is vital for a holistic understanding of educational matters.

References

Alkin, M. C. (Ed.). (2012). *Evaluation roots: A wider perspective of theorists' views and influences*. Sage Publications.

Anderson, S.E. (2012). *Learner strategy instruction and student uptake of strategies in a Japanese as a foreign language context* [Professional Doctorate thesis]. Queensland University of Technology. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/63676/1/Susan_Anderson_Thesis.pdf

Anderson, T. (1993). Defining and structuring art criticism for education. *Studies in Art Education, 34*(4), 199-208. https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.1993.11651906

Armon, J. (1997). Teachers as moral educators: A study of caring [University of Denver unpublished doctoral dissertation]. WorldCat. https://www.worldcat.org/title/teachers-as-moral-educators-a-study-of-caring-in-waldorf-and-public-school-classrooms/oclc/39214449

Austin, S., & Stanley, S. (2022). Educational criticism and connoisseurship: A case study example. In *Conceptual analyses of curriculum inquiry methodologies* (pp. 223-251). IGI Global.

Barone, T. & Eisner, E.W. (1997) Art-based educational research. In R. M. Jaeger, (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (pp. 73-79). American Educational Research Association Press.

Barone, T. & Eisner, E.W. (2006). Arts-based educational research. In J. Green, G. Camilli, & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 93-107). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Barone, T. (1983). Things of use and things of beauty: The Swain County High School Arts Program. *Daedalus, 112*(3), 1-28.

Barone, T. (2000). *Aesthetics, politics, and educational inquiry*. Peter Lang.

Barone, T. (2008). How arts-based research can change minds? In M. Cahnmann-Taylor & R. Siegesmund (Eds.), *Arts-based research in education: Foundations for practice* (pp. 28-49). Routledge.

Barone, T. (2010). Educational connoisseurship. In C. Kridel (Ed), *Encyclopedia of curriculum studies* (p. 313-314). SAGE Publications.

Braund, M., & Reiss, M. J. (2019). The 'great divide': How the arts contribute to science and science education. *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education, 19*, 219-236. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42330-019-00057-7

Cahnmann-Taylor, M. (2013). Arts-based research: Histories and new directions. In *Arts-based research in education* (pp. 21-33). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.11.15

Cahnmann-Taylor, M., & Siegesmund, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Arts-based research in education: Foundations for practice* (2nd Ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315305073

Chilton, G., & Leavy, P. (2014). Arts-based research practice: Merging social research and the creative art. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 403–422). Oxford University Press.

Conn, D. R. (2015). Juxtaposition: The coexistence of traditional Navajo and standards-based curricula. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(5), 618-635. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2134

Conrad, B. (2011). *Intentions, operations, beliefs, and dispositions of teachers at culturally diverse schools: Examining the intricacies and complexities of great teachers* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Denver.

Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Crowley, N. (1996). *The greater good: One school's lived experience of community* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Illinois at Chicago.

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. Minton, Balch.

Donmoyer, R. (2014). Elliot Eisner's lost legacy. *American Journal of Evaluation, 35*(3), 442-452. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214014537398

Efland, A. (2002). *Art and cognition: Integrating the visual arts in the curriculum*. Teachers College Press.

Eisner, E.W. (1976). Educational connoisseurship and criticism: Their form and function in educational evaluation. *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 10,* 135-150.

Eisner, E.W. (1991). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. Macmillan Publishing Company.

Eisner, E.W. (1994a). *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs (2nd edition).* Macmillan Publishing Company.

Eisner, E.W. (1994b). *Cognition and curriculum reconsidered (2nd edition).* Teachers College Press.

Eisner, E.W. (1997a). Cognition and representation: A way to pursue the American dream? *Phi Delta Kappan, 78*(5), 348-354.

Eisner, E.W. (1997b). The promise and perils of alternative forms of data representation. *Educational Researcher, 26*(6), 1997, 4-10.

Eisner, E.W. (2002). *The arts and the creation of mind*. Yale University Press.

Eisner, E.W. (2004). The roots of connoisseurship and criticism: A personal journey. In M.C. Alkin (Ed.), *Evaluation roots* (pp. 197-202). SAGE Publications.

Eisner, E.W. (2005). *Reimaging schools: The selected works of Elliot W. Eisner*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Epstein, T. (1989). *An aesthetic approach to the teaching and learning of social studies* [Doctoral dissertation]. Harvard University.

Ergin, A. (2021). An evaluation of educational information network (EBA) via educational criticism model. *The Journal of Kesit Academy, 7* (27), 37-51.

Feldman, E.B. (1970). *Becoming human through art*. Prentice Hall.

Feldman, E.B. (1982). Varieties of art curriculum. *Journal of Art & Design Education, 1*(1), 21–45.

Feldman, E.B. (1996). *Philosophy of art education*. Prentice Hall.

Fetterman, D.M., & Wandersman, A. (Eds.). (2005). *Empowerment evaluation principles in practice*. Guilford Press.

Flinders, D.J. & Eisner, E.W. (1994). Educational criticism as a form of qualitative inquiry. *Research in Teaching English, 28*(4), 341-357.

Forrest, M. E. (2007). A reflection on arts-based research. *Paideusis, 16*(2), 3-13. https://doi.org/10.7202/1072576ar

Frederick, G.R. (2010). *Learning with and because of each other: A high school art portfolio class as a community of practice* [Doctoral dissertations], Marquette University.

Geahigan, G. (2000). Critical discourse and art criticism instruction. *Journal of Art & Design Education, 19*(1), 64-71. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5949.00203

Geelan, D. (2007). Measuring the tale. In: *Weaving narrative nets to capture classrooms*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5700-7_4

Gerber, N., Templeton, E., Chilton, G., Liebman, M.C., Manders, E., & Shim, M. (2012). Art-based research as a pedagogical approach to studying intersubjectivity in the creative arts therapies. *Journal of Applied Arts and Health, 3*(1), 39–48. http://dx.doi.org/10.1386/jaah.3.1.39_1

Glatthorn, A. A., & Glatthorn, A. A. (2012). *Curriculum leadership: Strategies for development and implementation*. SAGE Publications.

Greene, J.K. (2016). Secondary-school department chairpersons' perceptions of pedagogical content knowledge (Publication No. 712) [UNF Graduate Theses and Dissertations],

Greenwood, J. (2019). Arts-based research. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of education*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.29

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth-generation evaluation*. Sage Publications.

Hanson, C.T. (2018). *Six standards for artistic supervision: A concise survey of the literature and philosophies of Elliot Eisner*. Texas State University.

http://christophertfhanson.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Standards-for-Artistic-Supervision.pdf

Harb, M. (2018). How can arts-based educational research be emancipatory? Insights from three research projects. *Journal of Educational and Social Research, 8*(3), 107-107. http://dx.doi.org/10.2478/jesr-2018-0037

Heywood, J.L. (2009). Teachers' perceptions of the effects of the Arizona instrument to measure standards (aims) test on Arizona high school math and English curriculum and instruction (Publication No. 490) [Graduate Dissertations]. Utah State University Digital Common. https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/490

Ingman, B. C. (2013). Rethinking the adventure education experience: An inquiry of meanings, culture and educational virtue [Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Denver.

Jackson, P. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Kelly, E.F. (1973). *Curriculum evaluation and literary criticism: The explication of an analogy*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, Louisiana, February 25-March 1, 1973).

Keys, P. (2003). Primary and secondary teachers shaping of the science curriculum: The influence of teacher knowledge [Unpublished doctoral thesis). Queensland University of Technology.

Khanipoor, F., Amini, M., & Bazrafcan, L. (2017). Evaluation of educational program in the master of medical education by Eisner's educational connoisseurship and criticism model. *Journal of education and health promotion, 6*, 55. https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp_103_15

Knowlton, R. (1984). *Development and application of an educational criticism model to assess program implementation* [Doctoral dissertation]. The University of Georgia.

Kramer, J.B. (2010). Closer to the Heart: An exploration of caring and creative visual arts classrooms [Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Denver.

Leavy, P. (2017). Introduction to arts-based research. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *Handbook of arts-based research* (pp. 3-21). Guilford Publications.

Magennis, G., & Knipe, D. (2018). Arts-based approaches to studying Traveller children's educational experiences. *Art/Research International: A trans-disciplinary journal, 3*(2), 20-47.

Mahovsky, K.A. (2018). A procedural mindset in a conceptual world of mathematics. *Mathematics Teaching Research Journal, 10* (1), 16-34.

Mann, J. S. (1969). Curriculum criticism. *Teachers College Record, 71*, 27-40.

McCutcheon, G. (1976). *The disclosure of classroom life* [Doctoral dissertation]. Stanford University.

McNiff, S. (2008). Art-based research. In J. G. Knowles & A. L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp. 29-40). SAGE Publications.

Mitchell, D.M. (2016). 'This is the best lesson ever, Miss…': Disrupting Linear Logics of Visual Arts Teaching Practice. *International Journal of Art & Design Education, 35*(2), 259-274. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jade.12061

Moroye, C.M. (2005). Common ground: An ecological perspective on teaching and learning. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue, 7*(1/2) 123-137.

Murrihy, L.R. (2009). Coaching and the growth of three New Zealand educators: A multi-dimensional journey [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. Waikato University.

Neilsen, L. (2004). Aesthetics and knowing: Ephemeral principles for a groundless theory. In A. L. Cole, J.G. Knowles, & T.C. Luciani (Eds.), *Provoked by art: Theorizing arts-informed research* (pp. 44–49). Backalong Books.

Nouri, A. & Farsi, S. (2018). The current state of arts education in Iran: A case study in two elementary schools using educational criticism. *The International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 37(1), 125-137. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jade.12151

Patton, M.Q. (2002). Utilization-focused evaluation. In D. L. Stufflebeam, G. F. Madaus, & T. Kellaghan (Eds.), *Evaluation Models: Vol. 49. Evaluation in education and human services* (pp. 425–438). Kluwer Academic.

Pinar, W.F., Reynolds, W.M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P.M. (1995). Chapter 11: Understanding curriculum as aesthetic text. *Counterpoints, 17*, 567–605. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42974927

Read, H. (1948). *Education through art*. Pantheon.

Scriven, M. (1972). Pros and cons about goal-free evaluation. *The Journal of Educational Evaluation, 3*(4), 1–7.

Singer, M. (1991). *Sound, image, and word in the curriculum: Making historical sense* [Doctoral dissertation]. Stanford University.

Spindler, J. (2008). Fictional writing, educational research, and professional learning. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 31*(1), 19-30. https://doi.org/10.1080/17437270801919867

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage Publications.

Stake, R. (2003). Responsive Evaluation. In: Kellaghan, T., Stufflebeam, D.L. (eds) *International handbook of educational evaluation*. Kluwer International Handbooks of Education, vol 9. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-0309-4_5

Stueck, L. (1991). *The design of learning environments* [Doctoral dissertation]. The University of Georgia.

Stufflebeam, D.L. (2001). *Evaluation models. New directions for evaluation, No. 89*. Jossey-Bass.

Stufflebeam, D.L. (2003). The CIPP Model for evaluation. In: Kellaghan, T., Stufflebeam, D.L. (Eds.) *International handbook of educational evaluation*. Kluwer international handbooks of education, vol 9. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-0309-4_4

Taylor, L. (1993). *At home in school: A qualitative inquiry into three Christian home schools* [Doctoral dissertation]. Stanford University.

Thompson, K. (2005). *Constructing educational criticism of online courses: A model for implementation by practitioners* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Central Florida.

Thompson, M.J. (2019). An inquiry into the internationally minded curriculum (Publication No. 584) [Dissertations]. https://digscholarship.unco.edu/dissertations/584

Tian, M. (2023). *Arts-based research methods for educational researchers*. Routledge https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003196105

Turino, A.T. (2014). *The role of mindful disposition in exploring teacher effectiveness in an arts-integrated school: An embedded mixed method design*. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 663. https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/663

Tyler, R.W. (1949). *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. University of Chicago Press.

Uhrmacher, P.B. (1993). Coming to know the world through Waldorf Education. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 9*(1), 87-104.

Uhrmacher, P.B., Moroye, C.M., & Flinders, D.J. (2017). *Using educational criticism and connoisseurship for qualitative research*. Routledge.

Vallance, E. (1977). The landscape of "the great plains experience": An application of curriculum criticism. *Curriculum Inquiry, 7*(2), 87-106.

Vars, G.F. (2002). Educational connoisseurship, criticism, and the assessment of integrative studies. *Issues in Integrative Studies, 20*, 65-76.

Westbury, I. (1970). Curriculum evaluation. *Review of Educational Research, 40*(2), 239-260. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543040002239

Wolff, T.F., & Geahigan, G. (1997). *Art criticism and education*. University of Illinois Press.

Zeph, L.A. (1985). A qualitative evaluation process for educational programs serving handicapped students in rural areas. *Research in Rural Education, 3*(1), 13-18.

Zhang, N., Southcott, J., & Gindidis, M. (2021). Integrating dance and language education: A pedagogical epiphany. *The Qualitative Report, 26*(10), 3112-3126. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4835

About the Author

Ali Nouri earned his Ph.D. in Curriculum Studies from Tarbiat Modares University, Iran, in 2012, after completing a sabbatical training in educational neuroscience at Lund University, Sweden. After graduation, he joined Malayer University's Department of Education and worked part-time in the Department of Mind, Brain, and Education at the Institute for Cognitive Studies until 2018. He currently works as an Associate Professor in the Division of Curriculum Studies at Malayer University. Additionally, he directs the Curriculum and Neuroscience Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Iranian Curriculum Studies Association. Nouri's research interests include educational neuroscience, AI in education, research methodology, and curriculum theory. He has authored over forty articles and ten books on the neurocognitive foundations of education. His recent textbook, *Crossing Mind, Brain, and Education Boundaries,* co-authored with Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa and Cynthia Borja, was published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in January 2023 as a resource for graduate students in Mind, Brain, and Education programs.

International Journal of Education & the Arts

http://IJEA.org ISSN: 1529-8094