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Designing and implementing a module to foster critical thinking in management education: An exploration of rationale and methods

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a critical analysis of a tutorial redesign within a final-year undergraduate management module at a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI). In response to student disengagement, limited critical thinking, and surface-level learning, the module was restructured to emphasise student-led inquiry, case-based learning, and dialogic engagement. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data, including student reflections, tutor observations, survey responses, and assessment outcomes, the study explores how the intervention impacted learning experience, academic confidence, and epistemological development. We found five interrelated shifts: from disengagement to relevance, repetition to critique, silence to voice, and resistance to reflexivity. Students reported increased confidence in applying theory, engaging in complex reasoning, and articulating independent arguments. Final assessments showed enhanced depth, originality, and theoretical synthesis. This study contributes to the literature on critical pedagogy and management education by demonstrating how small-scale, well-aligned pedagogical interventions can cultivate deeper engagement, critical capacity, and student voice. It calls for continued reflection on inherited teaching models and supports the integration of critical, participatory learning environments in higher education.

Keywords: Higher Education, critical thinking, inclusive learning, engagement, business education, employability skills

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1 INTRODUCTION

Business and Management education in the UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) in England is delivered within increasingly complex, diverse, and multicultural learning environments. According to national data, more than 2.2 million students were enrolled in UK undergraduate programmes in 2022, with a significant proportion from international and non-traditional backgrounds (UK Government, 2022). This diversity is a defining feature of contemporary classrooms, particularly in professionally oriented disciplines such as management, where students bring varied linguistic, cultural, and educational experiences into the same learning space. While such diversity presents opportunities for cross-cultural engagement and enriched classroom dialogue, it also poses significant pedagogical challenges in ensuring inclusive, equitable, and cognitively meaningful learning for all (Biggs and Tang, 2011).

Engaging this diverse student body is further complicated by the shifting expectations placed upon HEIs. Business Schools, in particular, are under pressure to deliver graduate attributes such as analytical reasoning, problem-solving, and independent thinking, which are now central to employability frameworks and institutional benchmarking. The AACSB (2013) identifies critical thinking as one of the key capabilities demanded by employers and accreditation bodies, alongside leadership, ethical reasoning, and adaptability. In response, many business programmes have articulated the development of critical thinking as a core learning outcome. Yet the pedagogical practices through which these outcomes are expected to be achieved remain underexamined, often under-theorised, and, as many studies suggest, misaligned with actual teaching methods (Brookfield, 2012; Tourish, 2020).

Critical thinking itself is broadly understood as the capacity to engage in reflective, logical, and evaluative thought. For example, Paul and Elder (2006) define it as the ability to analyse, synthesise, and assess information using reasoned judgment skills that are essential not only for academic performance but for real-world decision-making and ethical leadership. Halpern (2014) similarly argues that critical thinking involves the purposeful use of cognitive tools to make informed, reflective decisions across novel and complex situations. Despite this strong theoretical consensus, many undergraduate modules continue to rely on transmissive, lecture-centred formats that reward memorisation over reasoning, and content reproduction over critique.

Tourish (2020) has been particularly critical of the performative nature of business education, arguing that institutions often claim to promote critical inquiry while prioritising narrow vocational outcomes and student satisfaction metrics. In such contexts, there is little space for students to question the dominant ideologies embedded within managerial frameworks. Brookfield (2015) echoes this concern, noting that for students to develop truly critical habits of mind, they must be offered structured opportunities to challenge authority, reflect on experience, and engage in dialogue with peers. However, these opportunities are rarely embedded in mainstream delivery methods, particularly in large cohorts where teaching tends to be standardised and passive.

Responding to this disconnect, scholars have advocated for more student-centred and participatory pedagogical approaches. For example, Hmelo-Silver (2004) highlights the importance of inquiry-based learning in promoting deeper engagement, where students learn

by exploring, questioning, and making sense of real-world problems. In the context of management education, Jones (2010) argues that embedding reflection and problem-solving into the curriculum enables students to move beyond rote learning and begin developing critical engagement with content. These strategies are grounded in theories of deep learning, which stress the importance of meaningful, reflective engagement with material, as opposed to surface learning based on memorisation and recall (Biggs and Tang, 2011).

Despite growing consensus around these principles, the challenge still remains: how can large undergraduate management modules support critical thinking in a scalable, inclusive, and pedagogically sound manner? This question becomes especially imperative when modules are taught to diverse cohorts with differing academic preparedness and expectations of higher education. Many students, particularly those from international or non-traditional educational backgrounds may be unfamiliar with dialogic, critical models of learning and require clear scaffolding to engage confidently in such environments. This study addresses that challenge by examining a pedagogical intervention in a final-year undergraduate management module at a UK HEI. In the original version of the module, tutorials were primarily tutor-led, focused on anecdotal storytelling, and weakly aligned with the module's stated learning outcomes. Midway through delivery, student feedback indicated significant dissatisfaction with the perceived relevance and intellectual value of the tutorials. In response, the tutorial structure was redesigned to include structured reading, case study analysis, and student-led presentations grounded in the frameworks of Bloom's taxonomy, constructive alignment, and critical pedagogy. This study adopts a narrative, practice-based methodology to examine how these changes impacted student engagement, critical thinking, and learning outcomes. Drawing on student feedback, tutor reflections, and performance data, this study explores both a pedagogical rationale and empirical insight into how structured, student-centred learning can be implemented within a conventional module. In doing so, it bridges the gap between the aspirational goals of management education and the lived realities of student experience in higher education.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Framing critical thinking in management education

Critical thinking is widely recognised as a central learning outcome in higher education and an essential skill in business and management education. Defined by Paul and Elder (2006) as the ability to analyse, evaluate, and synthesise information through reasoned judgment, critical thinking equips students to navigate the ambiguity, complexity, and ethical dilemmas inherent in contemporary organisational life. Halpern (2014) emphasises its role not only in academic performance but also in lifelong learning and professional adaptability, particularly within volatile business environments. Equally, professional accrediting bodies have formalised this priority. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 2013) explicitly identifies critical thinking as a key graduate competency demanded by employers. Yet despite its rhetorical prominence in programme documentation, the integration of critical thinking into everyday teaching practice remains underdeveloped, especially in large, diverse undergraduate

cohorts. Brookfield (2012) argues that much of higher education retains a transmission-based model of teaching, where students are expected to passively absorb knowledge, rather than actively interrogate it. In business schools, this is compounded by the influence of managerialism, performance metrics, and market pressures that often reinforce a narrow, career-oriented curriculum (Tourish, 2020; Currie and Knights, 2003).

These systemic issues have been subject to sustained critique within the field of critical management education. Scholars such as Grey (1996; 2004) and Alvesson and Willmott (2002) contend that business education too often reinforces uncritical acceptance of managerial ideologies, failing to provide students with the conceptual tools or pedagogical spaces to challenge dominant assumptions. Mingers (2000) extends this critique by noting that criticality in management education must involve more than theoretical reflection. It requires pedagogical approaches that problematise knowledge, power, and context. This study argues that fostering critical thinking must be intentionally designed into teaching practice particularly in the delivery of core modules where students are socialised into dominant disciplinary norms.

2.2 Deep learning, constructive alignment, and Bloom's Taxonomy

Developing critical thinking requires more than content change; it demands a pedagogical framework that promotes active, reflective, and analytical engagement. A foundational concept in this area is the distinction between surface and deep learning, originally developed by Ramsden (1992; 2004) and further elaborated by Biggs and Tang (2011). Surface learning refers to rote memorisation and disengaged compliance with assessment, while deep learning involves personal reflection, conceptual understanding, and the integration of ideas. Brookfield (2015) highlights that for deep learning to occur, students must feel safe to question assumptions, experiment with alternative interpretations, and engage in open-ended inquiry. Biggs (1999) further developed the principle of constructive alignment, which posits that teaching strategies, learning activities, and assessments must be aligned with clearly articulated learning outcomes. If critical thinking is listed as a module aim, but the tutorials or assessments only require memorisation or passive listening, misalignment results. The literature suggests that misalignment can lead to disengagement, confusion, and diminished learning outcomes (Baeten et al., 2010; Light et al., 2009). In this study focus is given to the way that students initially perceive tutorials from intended learning goals.

To scaffold critical engagement more effectively, many scholars draw on Bloom's taxonomy, a hierarchical model of cognitive learning that progresses from knowledge recall through application, analysis, and evaluation to creation. Bloom's revised taxonomy, as discussed by Butler et al. (2012), provides a practical framework for designing activities that target higher-order thinking. In the context of management education, Athanassiou et al., (2003) and Nentl and Zietlow (2008) demonstrate that tutorials and assessments aligned with Bloom's upper levels can improve student performance in areas such as argumentation, evaluation of evidence, and creative problem-solving. Despite the theoretical robustness of these frameworks, implementation remains challenging in large cohorts. Erikson and Erikson (2019) point out that although learning outcomes often reference critical thinking, institutions rarely provide sufficient pedagogical training or curricular space to enact them. As a result, even well-

intentioned modules can default to surface strategies such as passive lecture attendance, simplistic tasks, or scripted tutorials thereby failing to challenge students intellectually.

2.3 Student-centred and active learning approaches

To overcome these limitations, numerous pedagogical strategies have been proposed. Central to these is the concept of student-centred learning, which shifts the focus from the transmission of content to the co-construction of meaning. Hmelo-Silver (2004) advocates for problem-based learning, where students engage with complex, open-ended scenarios that require interpretation, hypothesis formation, and collaborative reasoning. Such tasks demand that students apply theoretical knowledge while simultaneously learning to evaluate multiple perspectives hallmarks of critical thinking. Other active learning strategies include simulations, debates, collaborative inquiry, and case-based analysis. Kennedy (2007) and Roy and Macchiette (2005) have shown that these methods can increase student motivation, participation, and higher-order thinking when implemented within a clear framework. Also, Springer and Borthick (2004) note that real-world business scenarios, particularly those involving ethical ambiguity or strategic uncertainty offer fertile ground for critical engagement, as students must grapple with competing priorities and limited information.

These strategies, however, must be designed with context in mind. Light et al., (2009) emphasise the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy, noting that students from different educational systems and cultural traditions may find inquiry-based learning unfamiliar or challenging. Hofstede's (1983) dimensions of national culture, for example, indicate that students from high power-distance societies may be less inclined to question instructors or peers publicly. Fredricks et al., (2004) add that student engagement is multidimensional, shaped not only by cognitive effort but also by emotional investment and a sense of belonging. These insights are particularly relevant in diverse HEI contexts like the one studied here because we argue that educators ought to be aware of culture differences in teaching and that there is no universal approach to delivering seminars. In contrary, every seminar should be treated different.

2.4 Barriers to critical thinking in management contexts

Even when student-centred strategies are employed, several systemic and structural barriers remain. One challenge is the tendency for management curricula to treat theory as neutral and universally applicable. Caproni and Arias (1997) argue that such approaches fail to account for power, identity, or context, thereby limiting the development of critical perspective. Grey (2004) and Currie and Knights (2003) similarly caution that management education often encourages conformity to normative business models, rather than questioning their assumptions or implications. Institutional pressures also influence pedagogy. Erikson and Erikson (2019) note that increasing workloads, standardisation of teaching, and performance-based funding all serve to discourage pedagogical innovation. As a result, critical thinking may be relegated to the margins prominent in rhetoric but absent in delivery. In addition, students themselves may resist more open-ended or ambiguous learning formats, especially when such approaches appear unfamiliar or riskier in terms of grades (Calma et al. 2021).

In this context, Llewellyn (2001) warns against the superficial use of 'critical' as a branding tool, where courses present token gestures toward reflexivity without embedding them meaningfully into assessment and activity design. To be effective, critical pedagogy must be deeply integrated into learning environments, offering sustained opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and application. Brookfield (2015) insists that such environments are not accidental and that they must be deliberately created, protected, and supported by both teaching staff and institutional structures. Thus, while the existing literature offers robust theoretical frameworks and pedagogical models, there remains a significant gap in practice-oriented research on how these ideas are implemented within core undergraduate modules in business schools. Much of the existing work focuses on elective courses, small-group learning, or postgraduate contexts. As noted by Tourish (2020) and Brookfield (2012), there is a pressing need for case-based studies that examine how critical thinking is taught, experienced, and assessed in real-world classroom environments. This study addresses this gap by evaluating a mid-semester intervention within a large, final-year undergraduate module at a UK HEI. The intervention applied principles of Bloom's taxonomy, constructive alignment, and critical pedagogy to redesign tutorials for a diverse, international student cohort. This study explores the impact of this redesign on student engagement, confidence, and analytical performance. In doing so, it responds directly to the call for empirically grounded pedagogical models that can inform teaching practice across the sector.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a qualitative, practice-based research design with a narrative and autoethnographic positioning. This approach is grounded in the reflective experiences of one of the researchers, who acted as the module tutor responsible for delivering and adapting the tutorials of a final-year undergraduate management module at a UK higher education institution (HEI). This study draws on the ideologies of educational review that emphasise situated learning, responsiveness to context, and practitioner reflection as valid forms of engagement (Brookfield, 1995; Bryman, 2004).

A narrative approach was selected to capture the lived experience of curriculum redesign and its impact on teaching and learning processes. As Tenkasi and Boland (1993) and Demers (2007) argue, change in educational settings is often best understood through the stories and experiences of those involved. This methodology allows for a rich, contextualised exploration of how pedagogical strategies were developed, implemented, and received. This reflective dimension was supported through continuous journaling, informal student conversations, mid- and end-of-module feedback, and analysis of student assessments.

3.1 Context of the study

The research was conducted within a compulsory final-year undergraduate module in the Business School of a UK HEI. The module ran across one academic semester (2013–2014) and enrolled approximately 450 students, the majority of whom were international. Although the

module was team-taught, the researcher had sole responsibility for delivering tutorials and was therefore positioned to implement and evaluate pedagogical changes.

Initially, the tutorials relied heavily on structured, tutor-led discussion and surface-level reflective exercises (e.g. storytelling and experiential representations). Midway through the semester, in response to student feedback indicating disengagement and dissatisfaction, the tutorials were redesigned to include critical reading of academic journals, case study analysis, and student-led presentations. These activities were aligned with the module's intended learning outcomes related to critical thinking, evaluation, and analysis.

The redesign was implemented as a formative pedagogical intervention that is, a deliberate shift in instructional strategy intended to improve engagement and support the development of higher-order thinking. This offered a unique opportunity to evaluate the impact of tutorial design on students' learning experience within a live teaching context.

3.2 Data collection

Data for this study were gathered from multiple sources over the course of one academic semester to provide a rich and triangulated understanding of the intervention's impact. The primary source of data was student feedback obtained through two formal evaluation surveys conducted at mid-semester and at the end of the module. These surveys, administered by the university, included both quantitative Likert-scale questions and open-ended responses. In total, 300 students participated across the two surveys, offering insights into their perceptions of the module's content, delivery, and relevance. In addition to formal surveys, informal feedback was also collected during tutorial sessions through verbal exchanges and follow-up conversations. These comments, often spontaneous and reflective of real-time student sentiment, were captured through reflective teaching notes and categorised thematically after the module's completion. Student performance data also formed part of the dataset. Comparative analysis of summative assessment marks before and after the tutorial redesign was used to explore whether observed changes in engagement were accompanied by shifts in academic performance.

Finally, the researcher maintained a reflective teaching journal throughout the semester, which served both as a record of pedagogical decisions and as a basis for interpreting student responses. Together, these sources provided a multi-faceted dataset that enabled a nuanced and context-sensitive exploration of how tutorial redesign influenced student engagement, perceived learning, and the development of critical thinking skills.

3.3 Data analysis

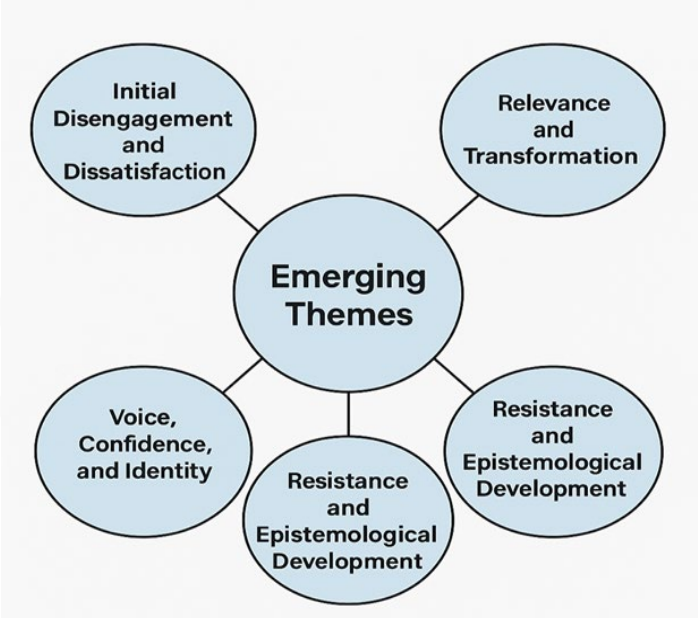
The qualitative data from student feedback and reflective notes were analysed using an inductive thematic analysis approach, following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Initial coding was conducted to identify recurring patterns in student comments and researchers' observations. These codes were then clustered into broader themes representing student attitudes, perceived learning outcomes, and engagement with critical thinking tasks. Quantitative survey results and assessment data were used to contextualise and support the thematic findings.

Table 1. Quantitative outcomes before and after tutorial redesign

Final-Year undergraduate management module – Higher Education Institution (HEI) in England

Indicator	***Before redesign***	***After redesign***
Students who found the module stimulating	*20%*	*96%*
Overall student satisfaction with the module	*24.9%*	*98%*
Students confident in their critical thinking abilities	*35%*	*91%*
Students confident in applying theory to real-world problems	*38%*	*87%*
Students who felt confident expressing academic ideas	*41%*	*94%*
Students who valued learning multiple perspectives	*47%*	*88%*
Students who felt better prepared to handle complexity	*44%*	*93%*
Students who felt the module improved their communication skills	*39%*	*92%*
Average final module grade	*50.8%*	*66.8%*
Module pass rate	*75%*	*96%*

Table 1 presents the core themes that emerged from the analysis, with illustrative student comments drawn from anonymised survey responses and tutorial reflections.



Visual representation of the key themes

3.4 Ethical considerations

This research received formal ethical approval from the university's research ethics committee. All data were anonymised and reported in aggregate form. Students were informed that their feedback might be used for research and consented through university-approved mechanisms. Informal comments used in this study were drawn from voluntary interactions and recorded

with attention to confidentiality. No part of students' assessment or participation was influenced by their involvement in the research process.

4 FINDINGS

In this study, five overarching themes emerged: (1) initial disengagement and dissatisfaction, (2) relevance and transformation, (3) critical thinking and conceptual mastery, (4) voice, confidence, and identity, and (5) resistance and epistemological development. The data were thematically analyzed in line with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase method. These themes are presented in chronological and analytical sequence, incorporating student voices, performance data, and theoretical framing. Each section integrates reviewer comments by providing a clear structure, deep narrative interpretation of student responses, and linkage to relevant pedagogical literature and module objectives.

4.1 Initial disengagement and dissatisfaction

At the start of the module, students expressed widespread dissatisfaction with the quality and depth of tutorial activities. Survey data collected after the third week revealed that only 20% of students considered the module stimulating, and a mere 24.9% expressed satisfaction with their tutorial experience. Early tutorials included storytelling, metaphor drawing, and passive exercises that many students felt were irrelevant or infantilising. Equally, from student feedback, noticed students highlighting:

> *"The tutorials in this module are very boring and not stimulating at all. They run more like story-time than actual learning. We are in our final year we expected more than this and I find it frustrating"*

Or;

> *"Drawing experiences might be fine and practical for first year because we were not very much engaged. But now I am about to graduate and I need to know how to analyze, present, and work in real contexts. This module fails to do that"*

These student reflections express strong dissatisfaction with the original tutorial design, which was perceived as lacking academic depth and relevance. Describing the sessions as *'story-time'*, one student highlights the misalignment between the pedagogical approach and the expectations of final-year learners. Another criticises the use of drawing activities, noting that while such methods may be suitable in early stages of study, they fall short in preparing students for analytical and professional tasks expected at graduate roles. These comments reflect a perceived failure in constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011), where learning activities do not meet the cognitive demands of advanced undergraduate study. The frustration expressed underscores the limitations of surface-level engagement and supports the need for more rigorous, applied

learning that fosters critical thinking and real-world readiness (Baeten et al., 2010; Entwistle, 2009).

Another student framed their disappointment through metaphor:

> *"It's like ordering a pizza and you actually get a salad instead. This is not what I signed up for. I wanted critical debate and this is not happening seminars and this is not exclusive to this module."*

This appears that this theme reflects what Ramsden (2004) and Biggs and Tang (2011) describe as a breakdown in 'constructive alignment' when the learning activities do not match the stated cognitive goals. Rather than developing analytical skills appropriate for final-year undergraduate, the module offered activities perceived as belonging to earlier stages of academic development. For example, we notice that students complain that they do not feel that they are being challenged and that is their expectations at final year of their studies.

Equally, during the observation during seminars it became apparent that students we disengaged and not focusing on everything else but learning. For example;

> *"Students were disengaged, often whispering or checking phones during class. It is very obvious that students were disengaged."*

It is interesting to note that the seminar atmosphere where there was a lack of focus, with students 'whispering or checking phones.' Such behaviours signal a lack of cognitive and emotional investment in the learning process, often symptomatic of surface learning environments where activities are perceived as irrelevant or unstimulating (Marton and Säljö, 1976). This underscores the importance of aligning teaching strategies with students' developmental and academic expectations, particularly in final-year modules where higher-order thinking should be prioritised (Biggs and Tang, 2011). It can be argued that this disengagement served as a clear prompt for the redesign, highlighting the need for more meaningful, dialogic, and intellectually challenging pedagogical approaches.

Equally, the low engagement also corresponded to poor performance and the average module grade stood at 50.8%, with only 75% of students passing the initial mid-term assessment. It can be argued that this demonstrates the importance of relevance and intellectual challenge in maintaining final-year student motivation. The problem was not one of content alone, but of pedagogy what Brookfield (2012) calls the *'learning experience design*.'

4.2 Relevance and transformation

A further theme that came apparent after the redesigning the workshop was the importance of relevance and the way it transforms student's participations. The importance of diverse learning activities align well with Bloom's upper levels application, analysis, and evaluation (Butler et al., 2012) and the importance of support deep learning (Marton and Säljö, 1976).

Post-intervention surveys revealed a significant improvement in student satisfaction and perceived relevance. From the survey, the responses indicate the following:

- 96% of students reported finding tutorials 'stimulating'

- 98% were satisfied with the module overall
- 66.8% was the new average final grade
- 96% of students passed the module

The above data following the tutorial redesign indicate a substantial improvement in both student engagement and academic performance. With 96% of students finding the tutorials stimulating and 98% expressing overall satisfaction with the module, the new approach clearly resonated with learners. This was further supported by improved academic outcomes, including a rise in the average final grade to 66.8% and a 96% pass rate. These results suggest that the redesign centred on student-led inquiry, case-based learning, and dialogic engagement effectively addressed earlier issues of disengagement and surface learning. The findings align with Biggs and Tang's (2011) concept of constructive alignment and support the view that active, meaningful learning environments enhance both motivation and achievement (Baeten et al., 2010; Entwistle, 2009).

Equally student reflections showed renewed engagement and a sense of intellectual ownership. For example, in their responses they highlight;

"Case studies in this module were my favourite and each one felt like a real-world mystery to solve. It was like independent and meaningful work, not spoon-feeding. It was a very nice change indeed and a good challenge"

And

"Seminars used to feel like an obligation and a tick boxing exercise. Now seminars feel like opportunities. I looked forward to seminars for the first time in ages."

And

"It was like someone finally turned the lights on. We were analysing, discussing, disagreeing. It became real."

The above quotes indicate that new changes to the module had a positive impact on student's engagement with the module. For example, we notice students stating 'my favourite module' or 'I look forward to seminars' indicate the positive impact that such changes have had on students. Equally, the language shift from 'boring' and 'childlike' to 'mystery,' 'challenge,' and 'opportunity' signals not only emotional investment but also cognitive engagement. These responses align with Springer and Borthick's (2004) argument that active learning models particularly those using problem-based scenarios encourage students to construct and negotiate knowledge.

Likewise, the tutor also similar enthusiasm and transformation. For example noted:

"Students started preparing in advance, engaging with contemporary academic readings and, asking about theoretical tensions. The seminar felt alive, like a university classroom should."

The above observation reinforces student transformation and engagement with the module. This highlights a shift in students' academic behaviour and mindset. The move toward advance preparation, engagement with contemporary readings, and curiosity about theoretical tensions suggests a transition to deeper, self-directed learning. The comment that 'the seminar felt alive' reflects the emergence of what Garrison and Archer (2000) describe as cognitive presence, where learners actively construct meaning through inquiry. It also aligns with Biggs and Tang's (2011) emphasis on constructive alignment, demonstrating that when learning activities challenge students meaningfully, classroom dynamics become more intellectually vibrant and reflective of the ideals of higher education.

4.3 Critical thinking and conceptual mastery

Another theme that came apparent was the importance of critical thinking. Of course, the aim of the redesign of the seminar was to support students' transition from descriptive to analytical and evaluative thinking; a movement up the cognitive hierarchy of Bloom's taxonomy (Butler et al., 2012). From the survey and assessment data showed significant gains in critical engagement:

- 91% of students reported improvements in their critical thinking
- 87% felt confident applying theory to real-world problems
- 93% said the module helped them consider multiple perspectives
- Final essays and exams reflected a marked improvement in theoretical comparison, depth, and originality

These data indicate a substantial development in students' critical capacity and theoretical engagement following the tutorial redesign. With 91% of students reporting improved critical thinking, 87% expressing confidence in applying theory to real-world scenarios, and 93% acknowledging a greater ability to consider multiple perspectives, the data reflect the effectiveness of a more dialogic, student-led learning model. Final assessments reinforced these perceptions, showing marked improvements in depth, originality, and the comparative use of theory. These results align with the aims of critical management education (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), support the cultivation of higher-order thinking outlined in Bloom's taxonomy (Butler et al., 2012), and affirm Mezirow's (1997) concept of transformative learning, where students actively re-evaluate knowledge through critical reflection.

Equally, from the surveys, student narrated,

> *'Instead of just repeating models and being descriptive by reading or copying and pasting from the book, I questioned them. Who created them, what was their purpose and how do they relate to practice? What do they miss? When do they fail?'*

This reflection captures a transformative shift from surface learning to critical engagement. From the above quote the student articulates a departure from passive consumption of knowledge typified by rote memorisation and reproduction to an active interrogation of theory.

By asking ‘Who created them?’ and ‘What do they miss?’, the student demonstrates an awareness of the social and ideological underpinnings of management models, echoing the core aims of critical management education (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Grey, 2004). Such questioning also aligns with higher-order thinking within Bloom’s taxonomy (Butler et al., 2012), where the student moves beyond understanding and applying, to analysing and evaluating.

And

> *‘We were not just learning definitions anymore but we were debating meaning, relevance, and limitations. It was tough, but it felt real. It was amazing and wished that we had this from year one.’*

This quote illustrates the emotional and cognitive impact of dialogic, student-centred learning. The student here describes a transition from definitional learning associated with lower-order thinking to engaging in debates around meaning, relevance, and limitation. This shift signifies a deeper epistemological engagement, where students recognise theory not as fixed knowledge, but as contested and context-dependent (Mezirow, 1997; Light et al., 2009). The phrase ‘it was tough, but it felt real’ points to the productive discomfort associated with transformative learning (Brookfield, 2012; Mezirow, 1997). Here, the authenticity of grappling with uncertainty is framed as both challenging and rewarding. The student’s regret that such learning did not begin ‘from year one’ suggests a critique of the broader curriculum and a desire for early exposure to critical pedagogy. This is a reminder of the recurring theme in literature advocating for scaffolded critical thinking from the outset of higher education (Calma and Cotronei-Baird, 2021; Tourish, 2020).

Also, one student described a shift from passivity to critique:

> *‘I used to think management theory was about rules and systems. But now I see it’s full of assumptions and trade-offs.’*

This quote illustrates an essential intellectual shift in the student’s thinking. It can be argued that the student has come to recognise its constructed nature embedded with assumptions, ideological positions, and trade-offs. This shift reflects not only deeper engagement with the material, but the internalisation of a critical lens, which the seminar redesign explicitly aimed to cultivate. It suggests that students, when given the tools and space to question dominant frameworks, can begin to see knowledge as situated and open to interpretation which is an essential outcome in critical management education. This reflects the student's growing critical awareness and aligns with the goals of critical management education, where learners move beyond passive acceptance to questioning the ideological foundations of theory (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

Equally, in their final assessment students moved from using singular models (e.g., Maslow, Fayol) to triangulating between multiple frameworks, often including critiques from postcolonial and Marxist traditions. For example, one essay extract read:

'Taylorism increased productivity but did so by intensifying labour control. In contrast, the human relations school prioritised employee well-being, but arguably as a means to the same end efficiency.'

From this quote it can be argued that the student demonstrates a good grasp of theoretical critique and comparative reasoning (Brookfield, 2012). By contrasting Taylorism with the human relations school, the student moves beyond surface-level distinctions to identify a shared underlying objective: organisational efficiency. This interpretation reveals an emerging ability to interrogate managerial ideologies and recognise how seemingly people-oriented approaches can still serve instrumental goals. From a researcher's perspective, this reflects successful progression toward higher-order thinking specifically, synthesis and critique as framed in Bloom's taxonomy (Butler et al., 2012), and aligns with the aims of critical management education (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Grey, 2004). It also illustrates how the redesigned tutorials supported the development of nuanced, context-aware perspectives on classic theories.

Likewise, during seminars the researcher noticed significant evolution in class discussions and assessments. For example,

'Students stopped asking, 'What's the right answer?' and started asking, 'Whose perspective is this? What are the consequences?' Also, the learning environment in the seminar was lively, engaging, students engaged in role play and questioned the provocative seminar activity.', 'Some essays were borderline publishable. They engaged with theory, critiqued it, and made coherent, original arguments.'

It can be argued that this implies a significant shift in students' thinking, from seeking definitive answers to critically examining perspectives and consequences. This development reflects a deeper engagement with knowledge as socially constructed, aligning with Brookfield's (2012) critical pedagogy and Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning. The remark that "some essays were borderline publishable" further illustrates the impact of the redesign in fostering higher-order thinking and critical reflexivity (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

This reflection highlights a significant shift in both the intellectual and social dynamics of the classroom. The move from students asking 'What's the right answer?' to 'Whose perspective is this?' reflects a deeper epistemological engagement, where learners began to see knowledge as constructed and contestable, an outcome aligned with the goals of critical management education (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Grey, 2004). The description of seminars as 'lively' and centred on role play and provocative questioning signals the emergence of an active, dialogic learning environment that fosters what Garrison and Archer (2000) term cognitive presence. The observation that some essays were 'borderline publishable' provides evidence of students' progression toward higher-order thinking and original argumentation (Butler et al., 2012), affirming that the redesign successfully cultivated critical, reflective learners capable of engaging deeply with theoretical material.

4.4 Voice, confidence and identity

In addition to improving academic performance and analytical capacity, the redesigned tutorials produced noticeable growth in students' confidence, participation, and sense of academic identity. By shifting from tutor-centred delivery to student-led presentations and collaborative discussions, the intervention created space for students to develop a voice intellectually, socially, and professionally. This is reinforced by survey data collected in the module, for example;

- 94% of students reported feeling more confident expressing academic ideas
- 92% felt better prepared to articulate their thinking in professional settings
- 89% reported increased participation in group discussions and activities

These findings reflect a notable development in students' academic confidence and communication skills. With 94% reporting greater confidence in expressing academic ideas, and 92% feeling more prepared to articulate their thinking in professional contexts, the tutorial redesign appears to have significantly enhanced students' ability to engage both intellectually and practically. Additionally, 89% noted increased participation in group discussions, suggesting that the shift toward dialogic, student-led activities fostered a more inclusive and active learning environment. These outcomes align with Brookfield's (2015) emphasis on voice and agency in critical pedagogy and support the literature on the role of participation in developing professional readiness (AACSB, 2013; Erikson and Erikson, 2019).

Equally, students described a transformation in their sense of academic agency, for example:

> *'Before this module, I was terrified to say the wrong thing in the seminar. I used just to make notes and say nothing. Be the quiet one in the seminar. Now I love participating and expressing my views. I know how to support my points and challenge others constructively.'*

This quote illustrates a powerful shift in student confidence and academic identity. The student moves from silence and self-censorship to active, constructive participation, signalling the development of both voice and agency. This transformation reflects the impact of the redesigned tutorials in fostering a supportive, dialogic environment where students felt safe to take intellectual risks. Again, it aligns with Brookfield's (2015) emphasis on the importance of voice in critical pedagogy and Erikson and Erikson's (2019) work on identity formation in higher education, highlighting how pedagogical structure can empower learners to move from passive observers to confident contributors.

Others highlighted how the new format encouraged ownership and reflection:

"I loved these seminars; it was like telling a story with theory. You had to build an argument, use examples, and really think about what message you were conveying. It is a difficult skill in itself and I am glad I have got the hand of it. For me, it felt that for the first time I was seen as a thinker and not just a student repeating what is in the textbook or what the tutor tells us'.

This student's reflection highlights the shift from repetition to intellectual authorship, describing the seminar experience as 'telling a story with theory.' This metaphor conveys a growing ability to synthesise ideas, construct arguments, and communicate purposefully skills associated with the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy (Butler et al., 2012). More significantly, the comment that they were "seen as a thinker" reflects a transformation in academic identity, where the student moves from reproducing textbook knowledge to contributing original thought. This aligns with Garrison and Archer's (2000) concept of cognitive presence and Brookfield's (2015) emphasis on voice in democratic learning. It also resonates with the goals of critical management education (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Grey, 2004), which challenge students to question dominant discourses and assert their own interpretive authority. The redesigned seminar format provided the dialogic space and intellectual challenge necessary for such growth, demonstrating the potential of participatory pedagogy to foster not only competence but recognition.

Similarly, during the seminar the tutor notices such transformation in seminar workshop. For example, the tutor noticed the following:

> *'Students who hardly spoke in the first few weeks of the seminar became leaders in discussions by the end of term. Their confidence was not just in public speaking but it was in making intellectual claims. The best sessions felt like academic seminars, not tutorials. Students were citing sources, posing counterarguments, and referencing each other's points. It was an eye opening.'*

This quote illustrates a striking transformation in student participation and intellectual confidence over the course of the redesigned tutorials. The shift from silence to leadership in discussion reflects not only improved public speaking but the development of academic agency and critical presence. Students moved beyond procedural contribution to making informed, source-based arguments and engaging in dialogic exchange behaviours characteristic of deep learning (Marton and Säljö, 1976) and aligned with Garrison and Archer's (2000) notion of cognitive presence. The comparison of the sessions to *'academic seminars'* rather than tutorials suggests a redefinition of classroom culture, where learners embraced their role as co-constructors of knowledge. This outcome supports Brookfield's (2015) argument that critical pedagogy fosters student voice and aligns with Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) call for learning environments that encourage the interrogation of knowledge, not just its consumption.

During this research what became apparent is that students drew connections between their development in class and their emerging professional identities. For example;

> *"The presentations and discussions in the seminar have certainly helped me prep for interviews. I could talk about theories, but more importantly, I could talk about how I think through problems. I can confidently say that this module has made me more confident. Now, I see myself as someone who can explain ideas, not just understand them. That makes a huge difference in a workplace setting.'*

It can be argued that the above narrative underscores the student's growing confidence in both academic and professional communication. By linking seminar presentations to interview preparedness, the student highlights the development of transferable skills, particularly the

ability to articulate reasoning, not just recall content. The shift from understanding to explaining reflects higher-order cognitive engagement (Butler et al., 2012) and the internalisation of what Garrison and Archer (2000) describe as cognitive presence. The comment also signals a strengthened academic identity, where the student sees themselves as an active contributor rather than a passive learner. This is central to employability in management education (Penkauskiene et al., 2019; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). The redesigned tutorials thus not only deepened theoretical understanding but also enhanced students' ability to apply and communicate their thinking in real-world settings.

4.5 Resistance and epistemological development

Despite the overall success of the intervention, a subset of students initially resisted the shift toward critical thinking and student-led learning. Some viewed critique as antithetical to their expectation of practical, employer-facing content, reflecting what Mingers (2000) calls the managerialist orientation common in business education. During the research it appeared that early reactions during the intervention included confusion, frustration, and resistance to ambiguity. For example, we notice students mentioning:

> *'Why are we questioning management? Are we not meant to learn how to be managers? I it not the point to learn how to do it better? This is rather confusing, why are we studying management? Put simply, I just want to know what works. All this theory we learn in the module makes things more complicated and why should we learn it'.*

This quote reflects a common point of resistance encountered during the tutorial redesign, where some students expressed confusion and frustration about the critical framing of management theory. The desire to 'just know what works and the questioning of why theory is necessary highlight an instrumental view of learning one rooted in practical utility rather than conceptual interrogation. This aligns with Mingers' (2000) critique of managerialism in business education, where students often expect to be trained in functional skills rather than engaged in theoretical critique. The discomfort articulated here illustrates what Mezirow (1997) describes as a disorienting dilemma which is a necessary foundation to transformative learning. Rather than indicating failure, this moment of resistance signals the beginning of epistemological development, where assumptions about the nature and purpose of knowledge are brought into question. As Brookfield (2012) argues, resistance can be a productive space for critical reflection, especially when learners are supported in navigating discomfort. This quote underscores the importance of scaffolding critical pedagogy in ways that bridge students' expectations with the deeper aims of management education.

4.6 Shifting Epistemologies

During this study, many of these same students reported meaningful growth by the end of the term. For example, students commented the following;

'Some of the debates were uncomfortable, but they made me think differently. I did not always agree, but I could see the other side. I remember it was week eight where we had to present on our findings and it was not an easy situation to be at. That is because I had to present on something that I did not believe on but I am thankful I did. It makes me value the importance of the critical thinking. At first, I thought critical theory was just overthinking. But now I understand how assumptions shape what we believe is 'truth' in management.'

This reflection captures student's transition from initial discomfort to deeper critical awareness, exemplifying the kind of transformative learning Mezirow (1997) describes. The challenge of presenting on a viewpoint they did not personally endorse prompted a re-evaluation of assumptions, illustrating the pedagogical value of intellectual dissonance. The student's recognition that 'critical theory was just overthinking' evolved into an appreciation for how assumptions shape perceived truths in management, precisely the epistemological shift that critical management education seeks to foster (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Grey, 2004). This quote also confirms Brookfield's (2012) view that discomfort, when supported through dialogue and reflection, can be a generative force in critical pedagogy. Ultimately, the experience enabled the student to engage with theory not as abstract critique, but as a practical tool for questioning power, ideology, and knowledge in organisational life.

This importance was equally supported by the survey data as shown below;

- 88% of students reported learning to value multiple perspectives
- 93% felt better prepared to engage with ambiguity and complexity
- 86% said the module helped them rethink prior assumptions about management

These survey results point to a meaningful shift in students' epistemological development. With 88% reporting that they learned to value multiple perspectives, and 93% feeling better prepared to engage with ambiguity and complexity, the data suggest that the module fostered the kind of critical reflexivity advocated by Alvesson and Willmott (2002) and Grey (2004). Additionally, 86% of students indicated that the experience helped them rethink prior assumptions about management, reflecting Mezirow's (1997) notion of transformative learning. Together, these outcomes demonstrate that the tutorial redesign supported students not only in acquiring knowledge, but in reconfiguring how they relate to it moving from passive acceptance to active interrogation of managerial ideas.

Similarly, final essays often contained qualified support for dominant theories, suggesting a growing awareness of ideological bias, contextual limitations, or ethical concerns. |For example, one student wrote:

'While I still favour contingency theory in practice, I now see how its language can obscure inequalities in power and voice within organisations.'

This quote reflects a shift from uncritical acceptance to nuanced engagement, as the student acknowledges the practical value of contingency theory while recognising its limitations in addressing power and voice. It exemplifies the kind of critical reflexivity promoted in critical

management education (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Grey, 2004) and aligns with Freire's (1970) call to challenge dominant narratives within organisational knowledge.

Equally, such finding was noticed by the tutor on weekly basis. For example,

> *'We saw the shift not in conversion, but in openness. This is certainly an eye opening and very rewarding to experience. Even those who resisted critical theory at the start were engaging with it by the end even if only to rebut it. That's intellectual development.'*

This reflection highlights a shift from resistance to openness, where engagement with critical theory, whether in agreement or rebuttal signalled intellectual growth. Rather than aiming for ideological conversion, the tutorials fostered space for dialogue and dissent, aligning with Brookfield's (2012) view that resistance can be a productive stage in critical learning. The student progression described here reflects Mezirow's (1997) notion of transformative learning, where exposure to unfamiliar perspectives prompts re-examination of prior beliefs. This kind of reflective openness is central to critical pedagogy and marks a significant educational outcome.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings in this paper affirm that such an intervention, grounded in the principles of constructive alignment (Biggs, 1999), Bloom's taxonomy (Butler et al., 2012), and critical pedagogy (Brookfield, 2015; Freire, 1970), can deliver measurable improvements in both student experience and academic performance.

5.1 Critical thinking as a pedagogical imperative

Despite widespread institutional endorsement of critical thinking as a graduate outcome (AACSB, 2013; Halpern, 2014; Paul and Elder, 2006), numerous scholars have highlighted the disconnect between institutional rhetoric and actual classroom practice (Brookfield, 2012; Tourish, 2020). This disjunction was evident in the original tutorial design of the module studied here, which relied on tutor-led storytelling with limited student interaction, analytical challenge, or relevance to assessment tasks. Students' dissatisfaction captured in feedback describing the tutorials as 'repetitive' and 'unclear' mirrored broader critiques of surface learning environments in business education (Craik and Lockhart, 1982; Ramsden, 2004; Currie and Knights, 2003).

This intervention directly addressed these issues by restructuring the tutorials to incorporate student-led case analysis, guided critical reading, and dialogic group discussion. This design was rooted in Bloom's taxonomy, aiming to move students beyond knowledge recall to higher-order tasks such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis (Athanassiou et al., 2003; Nentl and Zietlow, 2008). The improvements observed in students' assessment performance, particularly in their ability to articulate critical arguments, interrogate theory, and apply frameworks to

practical contexts suggest that the revised structure supported deeper cognitive engagement. This aligns with Biggs and Tang's (2011) model of constructive alignment, which emphasises the alignment of learning outcomes, teaching strategies, and assessment design.

By focusing not only on what students learn but on how they learn it, this study responds to recent calls in the literature to make teaching and learning design more visible and evidence-informed (Calma and Cotronei-Baird, 2021; Dwyer et al., 2014). In contrast to models that assume students will absorb criticality through exposure alone, the structured redesign this study demonstrates how the deliberate integration of pedagogical frameworks can promote higher-order thinking across varied learner backgrounds.

5.2 Relevance and ownership in learning

Another notable finding was the positive shift in students' perception of relevance following the intervention. Before the redesign, students struggled to see the applicability of theoretical concepts to their academic or professional development. This mirror concerns raised by Erikson and Erikson (2019), Kennedy (2007), and Levant et al., (2016), who argue that management education often fails to create meaningful links between abstract theory and lived organisational complexity. This study shows that by incorporating student-selected case studies and requiring students to take the lead in presenting and analysing content, the intervention increased students' sense of agency and connectedness to the material.

This study reinforces the argument by Springer and Borthick (2004) that student ownership of content is a catalyst for cognitive engagement. The capacity to choose and explore case studies created pathways for students to critically apply theory, validating Butler et al.'s (2012) model of learning as an active, student-driven process. Furthermore, such improvements echo the findings of Penkauskiene et al., (2019), who note that independent inquiry within guided parameters enhances strategic thinking and critical literacy. In doing so, this study not only confirms but expands this body of literature by offering a model that demonstrates the scalability of such strategies within a high-enrolment, final-year core module a context that is often left out of pedagogical innovation research.

5.3 Navigating cultural and epistemological differences

This study shows that while the intervention was generally well received, some students expressed discomfort with the transition to student-led formats, particularly those involving open discussion and peer critique. This tension is consistent with Hofstede's (1983) work on cultural dimensions, which notes that students from high power-distance cultures may prefer directive, hierarchical learning structures. Similarly, Fredricks et al., (2004), Light et al., (2009), and Thomas and Peterson (2018) highlight how internationalised classrooms require careful negotiation of learning norms, confidence-building, and inclusive facilitation. By demonstrating how structured, scaffolded peer-learning can gradually foster trust and participation, this study contributes new empirical insights to the literature on culturally responsive pedagogy. It complements the work of Caproni and Arias (1997), who advocate for learning designs that challenge normative assumptions, and Peach et al., (2007), who argue that students can transition into reflective learning environments if given sufficient support.

5.4 Reflexivity, responsiveness, and expanding pedagogical practice

A further distinctive contribution of this study lies in its timing and adaptability. The intervention was not pre-planned but implemented mid-semester in response to feedback, a move that reflects what Braun (2004) and Tenkasi and Boland (1993) describe as practitioner reflexivity. While much research on curriculum design is pre-emptive, this study shows that pedagogical change can be iterative and embedded in live classroom dialogue. In this way, the paper expands the literature on practice-based learning design. It supports Mingers' (2000) call for academics to move beyond passive content delivery and towards reflexive, human-centred teaching. It also offers a practical response to Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) critique that management education often reproduces ideological assumptions. Here, students were explicitly encouraged to critique managerial theories and reflect on their own assumptions through structured dialogue. This work offers a tangible model of how critical management education (Reynolds, 1999; Grey, 2004) can be implemented within existing institutional constraints without requiring complete curriculum overhaul and thus contributing an applied dimension to a largely conceptual field.

To conclude, this study provides strong evidence that mid-semester pedagogical intervention, rooted in well-established learning theories, can significantly improve student engagement, critical thinking, and academic performance in business and management education. By aligning learning activities with Bloom's taxonomy and integrating critical pedagogy into the tutorial structure, the module transitioned from a passive, tutor-led environment to a participatory and intellectually demanding learning space. This shift enabled students to explore, challenge, and apply theoretical concepts with greater confidence and clarity. These outcomes demonstrate that critical thinking need not be relegated to isolated modules or electives. Rather, with thoughtful design and responsiveness, it can be embedded into core teaching practices, even in large, diverse cohorts. The study thus contributes a replicable and adaptable model for institutions seeking to close the gap between graduate outcomes and classroom experience.

5.5 Implications for practice

The findings from this study offer several important implications for teaching and curriculum design in business and management education. First, they demonstrate that meaningful pedagogical change can be implemented incrementally and responsively, rather than requiring wholesale curriculum redesign. By embedding student-led inquiry, case-based learning, and structured critical dialogue within existing tutorial structures, tutors can create more intellectually engaging and inclusive learning environments, even in large cohorts. This supports a more dynamic and reflexive model of teaching, where student feedback and performance are used to adapt delivery in real time.

Second, the study reinforces the importance of aligning learning outcomes, activities, and assessment, a principle central to constructive alignment theory (Biggs and Tang, 2011). This study shows when students understand the relevance of tutorial activities to their academic and professional development, they are more likely to invest effort and engage deeply. For

curriculum developers and module leaders, this highlights the value of designing tasks that not only reflect academic standards but also encourage autonomy, critical reflection, and application. Finally, the results show that student diversity, cultural, educational, and experiential should not be treated as a constraint on critical pedagogy. Instead, when scaffolded appropriately, diverse learning communities can thrive in dialogic, inquiry-based classrooms, supporting wider institutional goals around inclusion and global engagement.

5.6 Future research

While the present study offers promising insights into the benefits of critical tutorial redesign, further research is needed to build on these findings. One key area for future investigation is the long-term impact of such interventions. Longitudinal studies could examine whether the gains in critical thinking, confidence, and engagement observed during the module persist into subsequent academic modules or professional contexts. This would help establish whether such pedagogical approaches contribute to sustained intellectual development or graduate attributes valued by employers.

Another promising direction is comparative research across disciplinary boundaries and learning modalities. Management tutors/module leaders' findings many features with other professionally oriented fields such as nursing, or law, where critical thinking is also essential. Comparative studies could explore how similar interventions function in different subject areas or in online and blended learning environments. Additionally, given the culturally diverse composition of many higher education seminars, further inquiry into culturally responsive critical pedagogy is warranted. Understanding how students from varying educational and cultural backgrounds engage with peer-led, critical learning formats could inform more nuanced and inclusive teaching practices. Finally, future research should explore the development and use of assessment tools that more effectively capture the growth of critical thinking. Rubric-based evaluation, reflective journals, and portfolio assessments could provide richer data and support more targeted feedback, helping to ensure that critical pedagogy is not only enacted, but meaningfully assessed.

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APPENDIX – THEMATIC ANALYSIS TABLE

Theme	Sub-theme	Description	Illustrative Quotes
1. Initial disengagement and dissatisfaction	Misalignment with expectations	Early tutorials perceived as childlike, irrelevant, and unchallenging, especially for final-year students.	'The tutorials... run more like story-time than actual learning." "This module fails to prepare us for real contexts."
	Passive learning environment	Low engagement in class and poor assessment outcomes indicated surface learning.	"Students were disengaged, often whispering or checking phones during class."
2. Relevance and transformation	Enhanced engagement	Redesign of tutorials introduced student-led, relevant, and intellectually stimulating activities.	"Case studies... felt like a real-world mystery to solve." "It was like someone finally turned the lights on."
	Improved performance	Substantial increase in student satisfaction and assessment outcomes.	"Seminars feel like opportunities... I looked forward to them."
3. Critical thinking and conceptual mastery	Development of analytical skills	Students shifted from rote learning to questioning assumptions and engaging critically with theory.	"Instead of just repeating models... I questioned them." "Now I see [management theory] is full of assumptions and trade-offs."
	Comparative reasoning	Students applied and critiqued multiple theories in assessments.	"Taylorism increased productivity... human relations school... arguably as a means to the same end."
4. Voice, confidence, and identity	Growth in academic confidence	Increased participation and ownership of learning; students saw themselves as thinkers.	"Now I love participating... I know how to support my points and challenge others constructively." "It was like telling a story with theory."
	Professional readiness	Students made explicit connections between seminar skills and employability.	"This module has made me more confident... I see myself as someone who can explain ideas."
5. Resistance and epistemological development	Initial confusion and resistance	Some students struggled with ambiguity and critique, expecting practical, 'managerial' content.	"I just want to know what works... this theory makes things more complicated."
	Transformative shifts	Students later embraced complexity and developed reflexivity.	"Critical theory was just overthinking... now I understand how assumptions shape 'truth'." "Even those who resisted... were engaging with it by the end, even if only to rebut it."