

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Graduate School of Education
IB Certificate Program



EDUC 626:
Inquiry Into Action – IB Teachers, Learners and Schools
3 Credits
CRN: 83088
Fall 2015

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Office Hours: By appointment

Office: 2603 Thompson Hall

Meeting Dates: September 1 – November 23

Meeting Time: online

Meeting Location: online

Course Description: This course explores and utilizes the action research and qualitative research process to help educational practitioners plan and complete an action research study related to IB learners, teachers or schools. Furthermore, the course examines the social, cultural and ethical issues of conducting research with students.

Prerequisites: Admission to GSE, enrollment in APITDIE IB certificate program and completion of EDUC 621: Teaching and Learning in the International Baccalaureate Programs, or permission of the instructor.

Nature of Course: This course is an online action research course. This means that our work together will primarily be through dialogue with each other. Instead of utilizing

lectures, each class will depend on the ideas that we collectively develop as we engage in ongoing discussion about international education, the International Baccalaureate, and action research. Your own experiences as a teacher, reader, writer, and learner, along with the course readings, will be an important part of our developing collective understandings.

DELIVERY METHODS

This course will be delivered online using an **asynchronous** format via the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) housed in the MyMason portal. You will log in to the Blackboard course site using your Mason email name (everything before “@masonlive.gmu.edu) and email password. The course site will be available on August 28, 2015 at 8:00AM.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

To participate in this course, students will need the following resources:

- High-speed Internet access with a standard up-to-date browser, either Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox. Opera and Safari are not compatible with Blackboard;
- Consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course
- The following software plug-ins for Pcs and Macs respectively, available for free downloading by clicking on the link next to each plug-in:
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>
 - Windows Media Player: <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows/downloads/windows-media-player>
 - Apple QuickTime Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/
- A headset microphone for use with the Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing tool

Expectations for participation: This online course is **not self-paced**. You will be expected to complete one module every week. Completing a module involves reading, completing journal entries, and completing any accompanying assignments associated with that module. You are asked to engage deeply with the subject matter, to take risks in your thinking, and to ask questions.

- **Course Week:** This course is asynchronous: Because asynchronous courses do not have a “fixed” meeting day, our week will **start on Tuesdays**, and **finish on Mondays**.
- **Log-in Frequency:** Students must actively check the course Blackboard site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, at a minimum this should be **3** times per week.

- **Participation:** Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which include viewing of all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and completing journal entries.
- **Technical Competence:** Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students are expected to seek assistance if they are struggling with technical components of the course.
- **Technical Issues:** Students should expect that they could experience some technical difficulties at some point in the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted based on individual technical issues.
- **Workload:** Expect to log in to this course **at least 3 times a week** to read announcements, and complete the module work. Remember, this course is **not** self-paced. There are **specific deadlines** and **due dates** listed in the **CLASS SCHEDULE** section of this syllabus to which you are expected to adhere. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities and assignments due.
- **Advising:** If you would like to schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content or other course-related issues, and you are unable to come to the Mason campus, we can meet via telephone or web conference. Send me an email to schedule your one-on-one session and include your preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.

Learner Outcomes: This course is designed to enable students to:

1. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of research studies within various paradigms, including action research, using measures of rigor;
2. Propose and complete an action research project that includes an overview, contextual statement, review of the literature, methodology, data analysis, conclusions, reflections and relationship to practice;
3. Make explicit links between theory and practice in their own action research;
4. Examine ethical considerations when conducting research with children including their own project;
5. Explain the critical importance of considering multiple perspectives using different approaches to inquiry; and,
6. Demonstrate leadership in conducting class discussions and presenting their action research projects to others.

Standards: The following standards will be addressed in this course:

National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)

Proposition 1: Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

Proposition 2: Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects.

Proposition 3: Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

Proposition 4: Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.

Proposition 5: Teachers are members of learning communities

ASTL 6: Teachers attend to the needs of culturally, linguistically and cognitively diverse learners.

ASTL 7: Teachers are change agents, teacher leaders, and partners with colleagues and families.

IB Teacher Award Inquiry Strands

Area of Inquiry 2: Teaching and Learning

f. What teaching strategies and learning activities support Program learning outcomes?

Area of Inquiry 4: Professional Learning:

- n. What is reflective practice and how does it support Program implementation and enhance practice?
- n. How are current standards and practices pertaining to the Program implemented?
- n. What are current innovations and ideas in the area of international education and how can these be applied to enhance the IB Program?
- n. What elements of the program authorization, evaluation and curriculum review process are implemented and how do these processes enhance IB Programs?
- o. What is the role of collaborative working practice in supporting the Program learning outcomes?
- p. In what ways does IB promote communities of practice?
- p. In what ways does the use of the ITC support building communities of practice?
- p. In what ways can we engage across regional and international boundaries to collaborate on IB research initiatives?
- p. In what ways can we share our findings and experiences to enhance the professional expertise of IB teachers, students and communities?

Technology (ISTE):

IV. Teachers apply technology to facilitate a variety of effective assessment and evaluation strategies.

V. Teachers use technology to enhance their productivity and professional practice.

Standards and Outcomes Matrix:

Outcomes	NBPTS/ASTL	IB	Technology
1	4	n o, p	
2	4	f, n o, p	IV
3	1, 2, 4	f, n o, p	
4	4, 6	n o, p	
5	1, 4, 6	f, n o, p	
6	5, 7	f, n o, p	V

Required Course Texts:

Mills, G.E. (2014). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Person Education, Inc., Merrill Prentice Hall. ISBN: 978-0132887762.

Hendricks, C. (2012). *Improving schools through action research: A reflective practice approach* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. ISBN: 978-0132868648

GMU polices and resources for students:

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>].
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <https://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/0203/policies/computing.html>].
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].

Professional Dispositions: Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

Core Values Commitment

The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles. [See <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>]

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [<http://gse.gmu.edu/>].

Incomplete (IN): This grade may be given to students who are in good standing, but who may be unable to complete scheduled course work for a cause beyond reasonable control. The student must then complete all the requirements by the end of the ninth week of the next semester, not including summer term, and the instructor must turn in the final grade by the end of the 10th week. Unless an explicit written extension is filed with the Registrar's Office by the faculty deadline, the grade of IN is changed by the registrar to an F (Mason catalog). Faculty may grant an incomplete with a contract developed by the student with a reasonable time to complete the course at the discretion of the faculty member. The faculty member does not need to allow up to the following semester for the student to complete the course. A copy of the contract will be kept on file in the APTDIE office.

GMU E-mail & Web Policy

Mason uses electronic mail (www.gmu.edu/email) to provide official information to students. Examples include notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly (Mason catalog).

Course Withdrawal with Dean Approval

For graduate and non-degree students, withdrawal after the last day for dropping a course requires approval by the student's academic dean, and is permitted only for nonacademic reasons that prevent course completion (Mason catalog). Students must contact an academic advisor in APTDIE to withdraw after the deadline. There is no guarantee that such withdraws will be permitted.

Integrity of Work

Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated as such.

Violations of the Honor Code include:

1. Copying a paper or part of a paper from another student (current or past);
2. Reusing work that you have already submitted for another class (unless express permission has been granted by your current professor **before** you submit the work);
3. Copying the words of an author from a textbook or any printed source (including the Internet) or closely paraphrasing without providing a citation to credit the author. For examples of what should be cited, please refer to: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02/>
4. You may also not “reuse” fieldwork hours. Each placement must have 20 documented hours that are solely for each course that you are in; you may be at the same site, but the same hours may not be counted towards the same course.

Grading Policy: At George Mason University course work is measured in terms of quantity and quality. A credit normally represents one hour per week of lecture or recitation or not fewer than two hours per week of laboratory work throughout a semester. The number of credits is a measure of quantity. The grade is a measure of quality. The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

Grade	GRADING	Grade Points	Interpretation
A+	=100	4.00	Represents mastery of the subject through effort beyond basic requirements
A	94-99	4.00	
A-	90-93	3.67	
B+	85-89	3.33	Reflects an understanding of and the ability to apply theories and principles at a basic level
B	80-84	3.00	
C*	70-79	2.00	Denotes an unacceptable level of understanding and application of the basic elements of the course
F*	<69	0.00	

Note: “C” is not satisfactory for a licensure course; “F” does not meet requirements of the Graduate School of Education.

Blackboard Requirements

All courses in TCLDEL will have a required Performance Based Assessment (PBA). The required PBA for this course is the *Action Research Project*. The PBA must be submitted to Blackboard (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a onetime course, or part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of the performance-based assessment by the course instructor will also be completed in Blackboard. Failure to submit the assessment to Blackboard will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless the IN grade is changed upon completion of the required Blackboard submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

Late Work/Submissions

At the graduate level all work is expected to be of high quality and submitted on the dates due. *Work submitted late will be reduced one letter grade for every day of delay.* Because we live in uncertain times, if you have any extraordinary circumstances (*think* flood, earthquake, evacuation) that prevent you from submitting your work in a timely manner, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor as soon as possible after the circumstances occur and make arrangements to complete your work. *It is up to the discretion of the instructor to approve the late/makeup work.*

Human Subjects Research Review Process: Any research or action research that will be publicly disseminated must have prior approval of the GMU Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). Inquiry/action research that is used solely for the purpose of studying pedagogical aspects may be conducted without additional permission but cannot be disseminated. Detailed information on what is involved in submitting a proposal to the Review Board is available from the following web site: <http://oria.gmu.edu/irbnet/>.

Performance Based Assessment (PBA): All courses in the Certificate Program in Advanced IB studies will have a required Performance Based Assessment (PBA). The required PBA for this course is the *Action Research Paper*.

Course Requirements:

All assignments should be turned in on the due date indicated in the schedule below via Blackboard. The submission deadline for assignments is 11:59 pm EST of the due date indicated for each assignment. All projects must be typed, in a legible 12-point font, with one-inch margins, and double-spaced. All writing assignments should be submitted as Word documents, or a word processor based format. Writing quality (including mechanics, organization, and content) is figured into the overall points for each writing assignment, so please proofread carefully. Late papers and projects will not be accepted without penalty, except for in extraordinary circumstances. I am happy to clarify and lend assistance on projects and assignments, but please contact me within a reasonable timeframe.

1. Journals (20%)

Each week you will have a journal response to complete on the readings and your reflection on them. Prompts for you to respond to will be posted each week. Please make sure to respond to each journal prompt provided. Your completion of the journals is **20%** of your final grade.

2. Annotated Bibliography (15%)

Each student will create an annotated bibliography of a minimum of ten (10) resources related to the subject and context of the action research paper. Ideally, the ten resources utilized in the annotated bibliography will be resources used to help create the literature review and inform that theoretical basis of the paper. Further information regarding the annotated bibliography can be found on Blackboard.

3. Action Research Study

The action research study is comprised of three major components: 1) the action research plan of action, 2) the final action research paper, and 3) a multimedia presentation of the project.

A. Action Research Plan of Action (10%)

Students will submit an action research plan of 4-7 double spaced pages that includes the following components:

- 1) An area-of-focus statement

- 2) Develops a research question
 - 3) Describes the intervention or innovations
 - 4) Describes the membership of the action research group
 - 5) Describes negotiations that need to be undertaken
 - 6) Develops a timeline
 - 7) Develops a statement of resources
 - 8) Develops data collection ideas
- Additional information will be provided on Blackboard.

B. Final Action Research Paper (35%)

Each student will write a research paper that includes the following sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings (with accompanying samples/examples), analysis and implications for practice, and reflections. Papers must follow current APA formatting guidelines. See the appendix for further information and the rubric. Additional information will be provided on Blackboard.

C. Presentation of Action Research (20%)

Each student will create a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation of his or her action research project. Like the paper, the presentation should include an introduction, summary of the literature, description of the methodology, findings, analysis and implications for practice, and reflections. The presentations will be uploaded by the instructor into a shared folder on Blackboard so that all participants in the class can view the presentations. Additional information will be provided on Blackboard.

Assignments, Grading, and Due Dates:

Assignment	Percent of Final Grade	Outcomes Addressed	Due Date
Journals	20	1, 3, 4, 6	Weekly
Annotated Bibliography	15	1, 3, 5	October 12
Plan of Action	10	2, 3, 4	September 28
Action Research Paper*	35	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	November 23
Presentation of Action Research	20	5, 6	November 23

***Designated Performance Based Assessment**

EDUC 626 Class Schedule

Module 1	<i>Introduction to Action Research and Ethics</i>
Dates	September 1 - 7
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Introduction to Action Research,” Sagor (On Blackboard) • “Understanding Action Research,” Mills, Chapter 1 • “Ethics,” Mills, Chapter 2
Assignments due	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read syllabus and course schedule 2. Complete Journal 1

Module 2	<i>Finding a Focus and Determining the Action Research Questions</i>
Dates	September 8 - 14
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Deciding on an Area of Focus,” Mills, Chapter 3 (pages 41 – 46 and 60 -67) • “Generating Research Ideas Through Reflection,” Hendricks, Chapter 2 • “Initial Planning of the Action Research Study,” Hendricks, Chapter 4
Assignments due	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Journal 2

Module 3	<i>Building a Data Collection Plan</i>
Dates	September 15 - 21
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Strategies for Collecting Data,” Hendricks, Chapter 5 • “Data Collection Techniques,” Mills, Chapter 4 • Data Collection Methods (online)
Assignments due	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Journal 3

Module 4	<i>Final Planning Before Implementation of the Study</i>
Dates	September 22 - 28
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Data Collection Considerations: Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability,” Mills, Chapter 5 • “Final Planning Before Implementation of the Study,” Hendricks, Chapter 6 (skim)
Assignments due	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Journal 4 2. Plan of Action

Module 5	<i>Creating a Literature Review</i>
Dates	September 29 0 October 5
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Connecting Theory and Action: Reviewing the Literature”, Hendricks, Chapter 3 • How to write a literature review (online) • http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/literature-reviews/ • “Deciding on an Area of Focus,” Mills, Chapter 3 (pages 46 – 66) (skim)
Assignments due	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Journal 5

Module 6	<i>Analyzing the Data</i>
Dates	October 6 - 12
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Strategies for Data Analysis,” Hendricks, Chapter 7 • “Data Analysis and Interpretation,” Mills, Chapter 6
Assignments due	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Journal 6 2. Annotated bibliography

Module 7	<i>Turning Findings Into Action Plans</i>
Dates	October 13 - 19
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Action Planning for Educational Change,” Mills, Chapter 7 • “Turning Findings Into Action Plans,” Sagor, Chapter 9 (online)
Assignments due	1. Complete Journal 7

Module 8	<i>Reporting and Sharing Action Research</i>
Dates	October 20 – 26
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Writing Up Action Research,” Mills, Chapter 8
Assignments due	1. Complete Journal 8

Module 9	<i>Reporting and Sharing Action Research, Part 2</i>
Dates	October 27 – November 2
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Writing and Disseminating the Action Research Report,” Hendricks, Chapter 8
Assignments due	1. Complete Journal 9

Module 10	<i>Action Research Papers</i>
Dates	November 3 - 9
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None – writing week
Assignments due	1. Complete Journal 10

Module 11	<i>Action Research Papers</i>
Dates	November 10 - 16
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None – writing week
Assignments due	1. Complete Journal 11

Module 12	<i>Self-Evaluation and Presentation of Action Research Projects</i>
Dates	November 17 - 23
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None – writing week
Assignments due	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Journal 12 2. Action Research Paper 3. Presentation of Action Research

APPENDIX

PBA: Action Research Paper

Each student will write an action research paper detailing the action research project that he/she conducted. The paper should include the following sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings (with accompanying samples/examples), analysis and implications for practice, and reflections.

- The introduction should explain what the overall purpose of the action research project is and provide a clear synopsis of what is to come in the paper.
- The literature review should explain what others are writing in the subject area.
- The methodology should explain what the student did to collect data and why those specific methods were utilized.
- The findings section should explain what the student found. Specific examples/samples of the data collected should be provided.
- In the analysis, the student should examine the data and note themes that emerge from the findings.
- In the implications section, each student should review the findings and analysis and suggest what the work implies about education/his or her class/his or her practice.
- The final portion of the paper should be a reflection. The reflection should be twofold: the student should reflect on the process of doing action research (what was learned, what would/could be done differently, etc.), and the student should reflect on the findings of his or her research.

The final paper should be 12-15 double spaced pages, plus appendices, written **in correct APA formatting, and adhere to graduate level expectations.**

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Action Research Paper Rubric

Action Research				
<i>Criteria:</i>	Exemplary 4	Proficient 3	Partially proficient 2	Not proficient 1
Introduction	<p>The introduction is clear and comprehensive.</p> <p>The topic being explored is clearly explained in detail.</p> <p>The rationale for exploring the topic is explained in-depth.</p>	<p>The introduction is clear and provides a solid sketch of what is to come in the paper.</p> <p>The topic being explored is clearly with some detail.</p> <p>The rationale for exploring the topic is explained in some detail.</p>	<p>The introduction is vague and is lacking in detail.</p> <p>The topic vaguely described with some detail.</p> <p>The rationale for exploring the topic is vague with limited detail.</p>	<p>The introduction provides little to no description of the paper.</p> <p>The topic being explored is not clearly articulated.</p> <p>The rationale for exploring the topic is not explained.</p>
Literature Review	<p>The literature review contains a minimum of ten sources.</p> <p>Sources are woven together to form an accurate and in-depth narrative that describes the work being done in the field in the subject area.</p>	<p>The literature review contains a minimum of eight sources.</p> <p>Sources are woven together to form an accurate and a narrative that describes the work being done in the field in the subject area.</p>	<p>The literature review contains a minimum of seven sources.</p> <p>Sources are described, but not woven together to form a narrative that describes the work being done in the field in the subject area.</p>	<p>The literature review contains fewer than seven sources.</p> <p>Sources are minimally described, and are not woven together to form a narrative that describes the work being done in the field in the subject area.</p>
Methodology	<p>The methodology provides a clear and in-depth description of the methods used to enact the Action Research Project.</p> <p>An in-depth description of the</p>	<p>The methodology provides a clear description of the methods used to enact the Action Research Project.</p> <p>A clear description of the setting and</p>	<p>The methodology provides a limited description of the methods used to enact the Action Research Project.</p> <p>A limited description of the setting and</p>	<p>The methodology provides a vague or no description of the method used to enact the Action Research Project.</p> <p>No description of the setting and participants is included.</p>

	setting and participants is included.	participants is included.	participants is included.	
Findings	The data uncovered during the research is clearly presented in an in-depth manner. A well-crafted narrative is included that describes the findings in-depth.	The data uncovered during the research is clearly presented manner. A well-crafted narrative is included that describes the findings.	The data uncovered during the research is vaguely presented manner. A narrative is included that describes the findings, but is vague and may lack clarity.	The data uncovered during the research is not presented. A narrative is included, but is limited and lacks description and detail.
Analysis	The data is thoroughly and effectively analyzed. Several examples are provided to demonstrate the conclusions of the analysis.	The data is clearly analyzed. A few examples are provided to demonstrate the conclusions of the analysis.	The data is analyzed, but is limited in scope. One example is provided to demonstrate the conclusions of the analysis.	The data is vaguely or not analyzed. No examples are provided to demonstrate the conclusions of the analysis.
Implications	In-depth & comprehensive implications of the findings are explained.	Clear implications of the findings are explained.	Limited implications of the findings are explained.	No implications of the findings are explained.
Reflections	The author reflects upon the experience of enacting the Action Research in detail. The author thoroughly reflects upon the findings and implications of his or her work.	The author reflects upon the experience of enacting the Action Research. The author reflects upon the findings and implications of his or her work.	The author provides a limited reflection upon the experience of enacting the Action Research in detail. The author provides a limited reflection upon the findings and implications of his or her work.	The author does not reflect upon the experience of enacting the Action Research in detail. The author does not reflect upon the findings and implications of his or her work.
References	The reference section contains citations from all the resources utilized in the paper in correct APA formatting.	The reference section contains citations from all the resources utilized in the paper in correct APA formatting with 1-3 errors	The reference section contains citations from all the resources utilized in the paper in correct APA formatting with 3-5 errors.	The reference section contains citations from all the resources utilized in the paper in correct APA formatting with 5 or more errors.
Writing Quality	Individual analysis is comprehensive. Very clearly organized and very well-written with no significant errors.	Individual analysis is clearly presented. Clearly organized and well-written with few errors.	Individual analysis is incomplete. Organization and errors detract from overall quality of writing.	Individual analysis is incomplete. Disorganized and poorly written.