

PG Cert LCC Action Research Submission

Kalpesh Lathigra

Title

How can smartphone zoom photography disrupt approaches to visual literacy in photography education to enhance critical thinking during a time of social-media-driven image production?

1. Context and Rationale

Smartphone cameras have become the default mode of image creation for students. The zoom function—often dismissed as low quality or amateurish—is deeply entangled with social media aesthetics, digital interpolation, and algorithmic image shaping. Traditional photography education rarely engages with zoom as a valid conceptual tool.

This project investigates how smartphone zoom photography can disrupt conventional photographic norms and enhance critical thinking by foregrounding mediation, distortion, and the politics of looking.

2. Research Question

Primary question:

How can smartphone zoom photography disrupt approaches to visual literacy in photography education to enhance critical thinking?

Sub-questions:

1. What assumptions do students hold about zoom and image quality?
2. How does intentional use of zoom change their approach to visual analysis?
3. What critical conversations emerge when zoom is treated as a conceptual tool?
4. How does this method affect their ability to critique images in the age of platform culture?

3. Theoretical Framework

- Visual Literacy
- “Ways of seeing, image interpretation (Berger, Mirzoeff, Elkins)

- Post-photography - digital construction, computational vision (Fontcuberta)
- Critical Media Studies - mediation, algorithms, platform aesthetics
- Democratisation of Photography - inclusivity, everyday devices
- Experimental Pedagogy - disruption as a pathway to critical reflection

4. Methodology (Action Research)

Diagnose

Short task: students take two images—normal and maximum zoom—followed by reflection.

Data: notes, discussions, initial images.

Plan

Design workshop integrating zoom-based exercises, mini-lecture, critical prompts.

Action

Deliver workshop: zoom experiments, uploads to shared board, group critique.

Evidence Collection

Collect images, reflections, discussions, surveys.

Evaluation

Analyse changes in student language, conceptual awareness, criticality.

Reflection

Refine exercises, identify future directions, integrate into curriculum.

5. Ethics

Voluntary participation, anonymised data, no social-media scraping, safe critique environment.

6. Expected Outcomes

- Increased student awareness of digital mediation
- Enhanced critical thinking in image analysis
- Expanded understanding of photographic materiality

- More inclusive and contemporary pedagogy
- A repeatable teaching model