

Assessment Title:

A critical evaluation and the identification of next teaching and learning steps focusing on a case study of an individual learner or group of learners, based on an observed critical incident.

Introduction

A critical evaluation is the process of creating a balanced argument by looking at the benefits and drawbacks of an incident. It is an essential tool and should be used by any person who wants to enhance how they live their life and become more effective and successful in their field of work. For critical evaluation to work, the person needs to be humble in their self-evaluation. Humble people are very aware of themselves and know their strengths and weaknesses. By knowing your strengths and weaknesses, you will be able to know what you can improve to become a better, more rounded person.

One of the main groups of people that can and should use critical evaluation are teachers. Throughout this assessment, I will be able to research and analyse different models that are used in the role of critical reflection and how Donaldson's Four Purposes relates to my critical incident. I will be able to research and scrutinise highly respected teaching theorists, the theories that they have created and how I can relate their theories to my critical incident.

By researching and studying relevant critical incidents, observational studies, teaching theories, teaching professionals and the new curriculum for Wales, I feel that I will be able to write a well-structured and detailed critical evaluation that will be used to as reflective practice to enhance, and allow for continuous development on my teaching journey.

The Role of Critical Reflection

The role of critical reflection is to allow me to identify an incident, question what happened and assess the reasons behind why I have chosen this incident as a critical incident. Critical reflection calls into question the power relationships that allow, or promote, one set of practices considered to be technically effective (Brookfield, 2009). By critically reflection on teaching incidents and experiences that I consider to be "technically effective", I will be able to gain new knowledge that will enhance and strengthen my teaching skills and portfolio.

In order to be effective in critical reflection, I looked at a number of models of reflection that I could use as templates. I found that by looking at different models and how they are designed and represented, I began to question and explore reflective questions at a deeper level and allow for my learning to be better structured.

I started by looking at Bould's Triangle Model (1985). I noticed how it was designed in a simple diagram and showed the main areas of critical reflection, experience reflection and learning, and how each area relates to each other. The issue I had with this model is that it is too basic with no descriptions that would help to describe the three areas and how each area relates to each other.

The second model that I looked at was Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988). I found Gibbs' model more useful as the model had more stages and included the idea that feeling that we feel on a personal level can influence situations. It also looked at conclusions and action plans that can be used for critical reflection. However, the main drawback that I noticed with Gibbs' model is that you can argue that the model is not a good for critical reflection. My argument is that the user could create the same action plan over and over again which leads to no critical reflection happening.

The third model that I looked at was the cyclical model created by Akins and Murphy (1993). I noticed that this model takes inspiration from Gibbs' but they refine their model to address some of the drawbacks of Gibbs' model. By adding in tiles titled 'Awareness' and 'Analyse feeling and knowledge', it leads people to reflect at a deeper level to obtain their critical reflection. I found this model to be the most informative and easy to follow which led me to use it as a template for my own critical evaluations.

The role of teachers is to give students the tools needed to evaluate themselves. Some of these tools can include giving feedback, encourage students to ask questions and challenge why things operate in a certain way. In order for teachers to implement critical reflection for students to use in a successful manner, teachers must be able to successfully critically reflect on their own practices as it would be no use to tell someone to do something in the correct way if you cannot do it yourself.

Observation School & Class context

For my bridging and observation days, I was placed within an English-medium comprehensive school that is co-ed with pupils aged from eleven to sixteen.

Before I started my bridging I did some research into the school and looked at their mission statement which I found very inspiring as the statement talks about putting the pupils first and who are valued, supported and treated with respect and tolerance. I then had a look at the vision statement for the ICT and Computer Science department which looked at the idea that “by actively promoting the use of technology in all areas of school life, this will enable the enhancement of every pupil’s education and inspire them to reach their full potential in society”. I found this vision statement a great read as it gives me a sense of what the school and pupils expect from me when I start my teaching practice. I also noticed how both of these statements are derived from Donaldson’s Four Purposes.

I spent the two days of my bridging in the ICT and Computer Science department. I was able to observe a wide range of classes. These ranged from Year 7 to Year 11. I found that being able to observe this range of classes was critical in my observation as I could observe how the teacher adapted their teaching style and lesson plans to accommodate the age ranges. As a student teacher, this was vital experience and has adapted my thinking to self-scrutinise my own teaching style for the future.

Critical Incident Linked to Donaldson’s Four Purposes

The main critical incident that I observed during my bridging days was the ability of Teachers to take control of pupil’s computer screens and work stations. I observed how, by teachers taking control of computer screens, behaviour was controlled and the class became engaged with learning the topic that the teacher was trying to teach.

I found that this critical incident could be connected to Donaldson’s Four Purposes. Through my research, I could see that the idea of teachers taking control of computer screens falls into the purpose of ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world (Donaldson, 2014). This due to the fact that pupils can see that their actions have consequences and by the teacher taking control of computer screens away from pupils, pupils can understand and consider the impact of their actions when making choices and acting within the classroom.

Another purpose that could be connected to critical incident is the idea that pupils can witness and understand digital technologies and the permissions that computers have can lead to pupils using digital technologies effectively and creatively to communicate, find and analyse information. This means that pupils start the process of becoming ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives (Donaldson, 2014).

A third purpose that can be connected to my critical incident is that by understanding that control of computer screens are given to pupils who behave and are willing to listen, learn and engage in their work, pupils can begin to form positive relationships that are based on trust and mutual with both their teachers and peers. According to Donaldson, this can lead to pupils becoming healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society (Donaldson, 2014).

A final purpose that I connected to my critical incident is the idea that by exposing pupils to a wide range of digital technologies, pupils will start to think creatively to help reframe and solve problems. This can lead to pupils applying what they have learnt into creating new ideas and products. As Donaldson states, this leads to pupils becoming enterprising and creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work (Donaldson, 2014).

Literature Review

Observing the critical incident of teachers having the ability to take control of all the computer screens in their classroom was very interesting as it flagged up the main points of using this as both a behavioural tool and an engagement tool.

However, I noticed and observed other incidents that happened within the classroom as a result of this ability of computer control. This led to me explore and gain an understanding of a range of teaching theories that have manifested as a result of this critical incident.

Through my research, I explored the theory of Differentiation and how this theory could be associated with teachers having the ability to take control of pupil' computer screens. By taking control of computers, teachers can tailor lessons to the needs of each individual pupil. The teacher can change the content and delivery of the learning to ensure that each and every pupil can learn in a way that suits their needs.

I spoke to some of the teachers and asked how effective the ability to control computers was in terms of differentiation. All the teachers agreed that this ability was extremely and gave me key information that I enhanced my exploration and research of this area. Through my research I came across Carol Ann Tomlinson and her theory of Differentiated Instruction. Tomlinson's theory states that by:

“ensuring that what a student learns, how he or she learns it, and how the student demonstrates what he or she has learned is a match for that student's readiness level, interests, and preferred mode of learning” (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 188).

I found this area very interesting as it looks at the idea of tailoring topics and instruction in order to meet with pupils needs.

I looked at the different areas that teachers could use differentiation. One was to look at the ability of pupils and tailor their classroom learning and homework to their level of capability. Another area that differentiation could be used is for absences. Teachers would need to use differentiation to make sure that pupils miss as little as possible that could affect their education. Teachers would need to look at tailoring lesson plans to make sure that the pupil catches up with what they have missed. Teachers could send work home for the pupil if the pupil is homebound, or offer after school classes to allow for catch up of work. Differentiation would have been heavily used during the COVID-19 pandemic when teachers needed to tailor their lesson plans and topics to all pupils who were studying from home. This pandemic would have had a massive effect on teachers and would have influenced their pedagogy. Differentiation can be used to increase the Collaboration and Innovation areas within the Professional Standards. Teachers could collaborate and employ an innovative environment with pupils in order to build a positive climate of support that would be managed to make sure the outcomes are evaluated and applied, especially during the pandemic.

However while it is up to the teacher to make sure that the use differentiation is effective, it could be argued that pupils also need to make an effort and buy into this teaching theory to make sure that it works. Tomlinson states that:

“while I can make the argument that primary responsibility for differentiation instruction lies with the teacher, I see merit to assigning some responsibility for ‘goodness of fit’ between the learner and what transpires within the classroom” (Tomlinson, 2004 para. 2).

This is very interesting as it shows that while teachers have a responsibility to teach pupils, pupils also have a responsibility to learn and reflect on areas that they find could be a more effective way for their learning. I believe that if teachers and pupils work together and if teachers listen to the voices of their pupils, then differentiation will thrive and will lead to an enhanced and effective learning environment for all.

Another key incident that I witnessed was that by having control of all computer screens, teachers could share their screen with the pupils. This was especially effective for showing presentations as it allowed pupils to clearly see what the learning outcomes for the day are and to gain a clear understanding of what they needed to do. Pupils could clearly see their own screen which erased the problem of pupils trying to crane their necks or squint their eyes to see the presentation if it was only being shown on a projector. This led me to research and

find the Integrative Approach which was developed by a team of teaching experts, including Xavier Roegiers. Roegiers states that:

“great merit of pedagogy by objectives is its emphasis on the fact that the student can learn to do something, beyond the simple acquisition of knowledge and facts” (Roegiers, 2001, p. 1).

I found this article very interesting and made me think that by making sense of the learning programme, pupils can begin understand the learning environment and make connections. Pupils learn how to complete tasks by mimicking what the teacher does.

I noticed an example of this during my observation days. I watched as a pupil asked the teacher how to make change the colour and boldness of text within an Adobe Photoshop file. The teacher gained control of the pupil's computer screen and told the pupil to watch as the teacher showed were to go to find and use these functions. The pupil followed the arrow intently and watched as the actions were performed. Once the teacher finished, the pupil regained control and was able to mimic the teacher's actions in order to complete the task on their own. I found this fascinating as by the teacher using an integrative approach to the issue, the pupil was able to complete their task with efficiency and with little distraction to the rest of the class.

A third key incident that I witnessed was that by taking control of pupil's computer screens, the teacher can show that behaviours can have a positive and negative consequence. This led me to explore the teaching theories of Behaviourism (B. F. Skinner and Ivan Pavlov).

Through my reading I came across B. F. Skinner and his theory of Operant Conditioning and how reinforcement to combat different issues can be used as a method within Behaviourism. Skinner states:

“punishment is the application of an adverse outcome that decreases or weakens the behaviour it follows” (B. F. Skinner, 1963, p. 505).

Skinner condensed the idea of reinforcements down to two, positive and negative reinforcements. Positive reinforcements look at the idea of creating outcomes that are favourable such as rewards and praise, while negative reinforcements are the opposite and have unfavourable outcomes. I found this very interesting as I witnesses that teachers would use their ability to take control of computers in a positive and negative way. The positive reinforcement I noticed was that the teacher could show the pupil what they needed to do and to give help if it was needed. The negative reinforcement I noticed was the some pupils lost the control of their computers if they kept misbehaving and disrupting the class.

I noticed that these reinforcements worked in some situations and failed in other situations, especially if the negative reinforcement. I witnessed a pupil who was disruptive, lose control of their computer. Instead of seeing the error of their ways and starting to behave, the pupil increased their level of disruptiveness and was escorted from the classroom. This shows while positive and negative disciplines work for the most part, in some cases this theory can cause even more disruption.

I also looked at Ivan Pavlov's behavioural theory of Classical Conditioning and how this could be associated with teachers taking control of pupils computers. I noticed that during tests, teachers project an anagram onto each computer screen which that pupils should be quiet, listen and respect each other. I found that by teachers setting ground rules and by taking control of computers, pupils needed to wait to use their computers. This led to pupils becoming more alert and engaged, waiting for computer control to be passed to them, similar to the dog salivating to eat the bone in Pavlov's theory.

After witnessing this incident, I looked at Assertive Discipline and how this can be used to combat disruption within the classroom. I looked at Lee Canter and Marlene Canter's theory that takes into consideration that "pupils and teachers have the right to work in a safe, calm and professional environment" (Canter and Canter, 1976). I found that this theory to tie in nicely with Skinner's operant conditioning theory in regards to behaviourism. Assertive discipline looks at the idea that teachers must be in control of the classroom and that pupils have a right to learn in a peaceful environment. If a pupil interrupts the learning of the classroom then they need to be reprimanded. This can be done by the teacher taking away the pupil's control of their computer. If disruptive behaviour persists, the pupil could be asked to leave the classroom. Canter created this theory based on his classroom management research with special needs students and argued that "most students react well to an assertive discipline". This means that Assertive Discipline can be used to teach difficult students.

However, teachers must understand that assertive discipline tends to ignore pupils with extra needs or pupils who need different lesson structures. Therefore, other theories, such as Differentiation or Humanism, should be used alongside Assertive Discipline in order for teachers to create a positive learning environment for pupils.

A final incident that I witnessed was that when teachers told the class that they were taking control of all computers, some pupils began to loudly voice frustration while others began to panic and develop anxiety as they rushed to complete the work they were doing. I did some research into this incident and came across Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory Of Personality

which looks at the idea that in people can reach their potential and achieve goals by creating a range of factors that need to be met.

“For a person to grow, they need an environment the provides them with genuineness, acceptance and empathy” (Rogers, 1959, para. 1).

This quote provided a great insight into Carl Rogers’ thinking and allowed me to relate his theory to the incident that I witnessed. I realised that pupils should be allowed to work on topics without disruption unless it is necessary to do so and that teachers should not abuse the right to take control of computers.

I found that, by doing my research and reading in order to write this literature review, I have gained vital knowledge and experience that I will be able to use on my teaching journey.

Evaluation & Next Steps

After researching and writing my literature review based on the critical incident that I witnessed, I now need to reflect and evaluate my focus in order to identify the next steps that I will take.

In order to reflect and evaluate in an effective manner, I began by looking at different evaluation models that I could use as a template and reference. I looked at Kaufman’s Model Of Learning Evaluation and Brinkerhoff’s Success Case Method before settling on Kirkpatrick’s Model Of Learning Evaluation and the four stages that are associated with this model; Reaction, Learning, Behaviour and Results. Kirkpatrick states that:

“Evaluation is not an afterthought to training, but rather is meant to be integrated into the entire learning and development process (Kirkpatrick, 2009, para. 2).

This quote has increased my thinking and has helped me to realise that evaluation extremely important and needs to be implemented during lessons in order to increase maximum effectiveness.

I looked at each stage and how it can be used in a classroom. The Reaction stage looks at the idea of creating a questionnaire to measure how people found the training and if the training met their expectations. I could look at the idea of creating pop quizzes as a way to see what pupils have learned and if parts of a topic need to be revisited. The Learning stage looks at what people gained from their learning. I could ask pupils what they thought of the learning and if they have gained extra skills, knowledge or confidence. The Behaviour stage looks at changes in behaviour as a way to determine if the training was effective. I would look at the idea of making notes of pupils throughout the year in order to see how their behaviour has developed throughout the teaching year. Has a quiet child started to find their voice and

answer questions, has a disruptive pupil started to settle down and engage with the learning. The final stage, Results, looks at the measure of direct results and how the previous three stages blends together to create results. I would look at creating a pupil portfolio in order to see their learning progress. This can help to raise and red flags or issues that can be death with. Overall I found this model a to be a great way to structure evaluations and will help me to become a better teacher.

Critical evaluation is a vital skill that all teachers should have within their teaching repertoire in order to evaluate themselves as both a person and as a teacher. Teachers should also be able to use critical evaluation in their lesson plans and teaching practices in order to become more effective teachers in their work environment and good members of society in their personal lives.

I have found writing this critical evaluation to be a tough but fantastic learning experience. I have been able to research, scrutinise and evaluate a wide variety of teaching theories and the experts and professionals behind these theories. I have looked at evaluation models and how these can be used as an effective tool to improve pupil's learning environments. I have researched the new Welsh curriculum and the Four Purposes and teaching standards that have been designed to build and create a new generation of forward thinkers that will be highly skilled and employable and that the Welsh government and people and can be extremely proud off.

Overall, this assignment have increased and expanded my knowledge in how to be an effective and successful teacher and I plan to carry these learning experiences with me throughout my teaching journey.

Appendices

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