

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

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Introduction

In his 1993 publication '*Critical incidents in teaching*', David Tripp explains that the term 'critical incident' is one that refers to a significant change or turning point in an event or situation (Tripp, 1993, p. 24). Incidents are rendered 'critical' by one's wider contextualisation of the incident, which is usually within a social context, for example, in the context of this discussion, a teacher's behaviour (Wragg, 1994, p.64). Subsequently, critical incidents are produced by one's interpretation of the significance of the situation or event (Tripp, 1993, p. 25). Wragg (1994, p.64) writes that critical incidents are occurrences which are of greater interest to the observer, thus warranting greater detail and recording than other events. For the purposes of this analytical discussion, the researcher spent a day in a local primary school observing the children of a Year 1 class. Multiple incidents were observed and subsequently made critical by the researcher's interpretation and analysis. The critical incident selected for this discussion is one that demonstrates aspects of the behaviorist theory of learning (see *appendix 7*) where emphasis is put on "how to retain and change target behaviors through suitable stimulus-response tactics" (Haseman *et al.*, 2002, p.32). The following analysis will begin by providing important, contextual information regarding a critical incident, whilst acknowledging the necessity to comply with ethical guidelines. Next,

a methodology will be offered which analyses the research methods used to obtain the data gathered during the observations. Acknowledging the New Welsh Curriculum 2022, the critical incident will be discussed in relation to the 4 purposes of the curriculum, identifying whether or not it meets these 4 purposes. Then, the literature that surrounds the critical incident will be reviewed, focusing on educational theories and concepts. To finish, this discussion will identify the next teaching and learning steps that follow the critical incident, and reflect on the implication it has on future practice.

Observation

This section provides contextual information regarding the research setting, and acknowledges ethical guidelines.

The observation was conducted in a Year 1 class at a primary school local to the researcher over the period of one day. The children in the class were all aged between 5 and 6 years-old, however, the critical incident under analysis only concerns one child. The critical incident occurred inside the classroom towards the end of a morning lesson, just before snack time. In the schools most recent Estyn report, the percentage of pupils receiving free school meals was notably lower than the national average and very few pupils have a statement for special educational needs (Estyn, 2015). Under critical review, it needs to be acknowledged that this report is outdated as schools are moving towards the development of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for children with additional learning needs, and away from statements. Additionally, it is difficult to know the true number of pupils with additional learning needs

in a school as so many children who require additional support go ‘officially’ undetected, even if provision is put in place within the classroom (Dyson *et al.*, 2008).

When conducting any type of research, it is important for one to acknowledge and implement ethical considerations, especially when the research is conducted within a school. The British Educational Research Association or BERA (2018) believes that educational researchers should operate within an ethic of respect for any persons – including themselves – involved in the research they are undertaking. The confidential and anonymous treatment of participant’s data is considered a routine behaviour for the conduct of research (BERA, 2018). To ensure confidentiality and anonymity during this observational research, the school, staff and children have, and will continue to, remain unidentified, as demonstrated above. Moreover, all data concerning the observations has been stored on a private, password protected network where all information has been omitted.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this research is explained and analysed in this section.

Observation goes deeper than just looking at something or someone (Cohen *et al.*, 2018, p. 542). It is systematically looking at people, events, behaviours, settings and so on (Simpson & Tuson, 2003, p.2; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In reference to this analysis, using observation to collect data was the most appropriate research method as “it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather first-hand, ‘live’ data *in situ* from naturally reported data” (Wellington, 2015, p. 247). Cohen *et al* (2018) explain how using observation as “a

principle mode of research has the potential to yield more valid and authentic data” (p. 542) than more mediated or inferential methods of data collection, for example, a questionnaire. The high face validity of observation means it can provide rich, contextual information and reveal mundane routines which allow for verbal and non-verbal aspects to be documented, (Clark *et al.*, 2009) as evident in the critical incident under analysis where the teacher rewarded a child for good behaviour. Furthermore, observation enables the researcher to look afresh at everyday behaviours that otherwise would have gone unnoticed, or taken for granted (Cooper & Schindler, 2001, p. 374). Alas, observations are noticed to produce “unreliable results” (Louw, 1998, p. 28) as a result of difficulty controlling all of the factors that may influence a child’s behaviour, for example, tiredness or hunger. When collecting the data, the researcher was aware that the results produced would be near impossible to replicate. As mentioned previously, critical incidents are determined by one’s interpretation of a situation or event (Tripp, 1993, p.25) which is why obtaining the data first-hand is crucial, thus making this research method the most effective for the intended purpose of this analysis – to observe and analyse critical incidents within a classroom, and discuss the next teaching and learning steps.

The researcher adopted a structured, non-participant case study methodology for this observational research. There is a plethora of definitions for the term ‘case study’, for example, Nisbet and Watt (1984) write a case study is “a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle” (p. 72). However, for the purposes of this analysis, the researcher has accepted Creswell’s (1994) definition where a case study is defined as “a single instance of a bounded system”, (p. 12) as it is more relevant when discussing a child, class or school. It must be acknowledged, though, that arriving at a single definition of the term ‘case study’ is somewhat elusive as different authors approach this term

in different ways (Cohen *et al.*, 2018, p. 375). Wellington (2015) explains that a strength of case study research is that they produce vivid accounts which are “strong on reality”, (p. 174). This allows the researcher to gain a multi-dimensional understanding between theory, practice and social truth because the events are organically occurring in front of them (Adelman *et al.*, 1980). On the contrary, the findings produced by case study research are not replicable or generalisable, (Wellington, 2015) apart from when other researchers or practitioners see their application (Nisbet & Watt, 1984). Due to the nature of case study research, the number of participants involved is typically very small, thus meaning the results are not extensive enough to be generalised to a whole population, for example, just because one Year 1 child behaved in a specific way does not mean all Year 1 children will act in the same manner.

Dyer (1995) suggests that a structured observation must address the choice of the environment, so that there will be opportunities for the desired behaviours to actually occur. Before the observation was conducted, the location and environment of the observation was already pre-determined, in this instance, a Year 1 class in a primary school. With this prior knowledge, the researcher was able to think about the types of critical incidents likely to occur and consider the implications of them. While many researchers advocate participant observation, a non-participant approach was adopted for this methodology as participation may have threatened the objectivity of the researcher and, naturally, it takes away valuable time from the researcher, and thus, time away from their work (Mills & Morton, 2013, p. 52-3). It is trusted by the researcher that a structured, non-participant case study was the most effective methodology to implement during the observation as it permits the capture of unique features and occurrences that may otherwise be lost in larger-scale research. For example, using a survey or questionnaire to gather data on critical incidents would prove

ineffective and the unique features captured during observation hold the key to understanding the situation (Nisbet & Watt, 1984). Furthermore, this methodology was effective as it allowed the researcher to observe the implementation of aspects of the New Welsh Curriculum, for example, the 12 pedagogical principles.

Links to the 4 Purposes of the New Welsh Curriculum

This section of the analysis will outline the critical incident in more detail and discuss it in relation to the 4 purposes of the new Welsh Curriculum.

As mentioned in the ‘Observation’ section of this analysis, the critical incident took place inside a Year 1 classroom of a primary school. Prior to the observation of the critical incident, the children engaged in a literacy lesson where they looked at the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. Throughout the duration of the lesson, the classroom environment remained focused, yet it was evident the children were enthusiastic to learn. The critical incident was observed during the end of the literacy lesson (see *appendix 7*) where the children were asked to tidy away their resources and get ready for snack time. Naturally, with the prospect of food, the environment within the classroom very quickly became excitable. The researcher observed the class teacher rewarding a child with a *dojo* for tidying away the resources quickly; dojos are points given to the children for modelling good behaviour, for example, being helpful or successfully completing their work. Accepting Tripp’s 1993 analogy, the researcher observed this occurrence as a critical incident not only as a result of their interpretation of the event, but also because there was an evident turning point in the situation; the child was tidying up in an acceptable manner, and thus got rewarded for their

efforts. Also, the class teacher ensured that the rest of the children knew that the child had been rewarded with a dojo for tidying up sensibly by putting it on the interactive whiteboard, in the hope other children will mimic this behaviour.

In his 2015 review of the new Welsh Curriculum for 2022 '*Successful Futures*', Professor Graham Donaldson proposes four purposes of the curriculum. All children and young people will be: 1) Ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives; 2) Enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work; 3) Ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world; 4) Healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society (Donaldson, 2015, p. 29-30). The critical incident identified in this analysis holds evident links to the fourth purpose of the new Welsh Curriculum as identified above. The task of individually tidying up is one that demonstrates self-efficacy; the belief that one can complete a task-specific behaviour, (Green, 2008) for example, tidying up. Schunk (1985) explains that if a learner is self-efficient, their motivation to learn and acquire new knowledge is enhanced, (p. 208) demonstrating independence not only in their everyday routines, but also in their learning. The development of self-efficacy, as described by Green (2008), has been linked to developing a healthy, confident learners (Patall *et al.*, 2008, p. 270) which complies the fourth purpose. Moreover, this critical incident further links to the second purpose of the new Welsh Curriculum because practitioners are encouraging learners to be independent, and providing them with the skills needed to play a full part in life and work.

Review of Literature

This section of the analysis will explore the literature that surrounds the themes of the critical incident.

The Behaviourist Theory of Learning is one that is embedded within the critical incident under analysis. This theory suggests that “living creatures, animal or human, learn by building up associations or ‘bonds’ between their experience, their thinking and their behaviour” (Pollard *et al.*, 2008, p. 173). Dating as far back as 1911, research conducted by Thorndike expressed both the ‘law of effect’: The greater the satisfaction or discomfort, the greater the strengthening or weakening of the bond; as well as the ‘law of exercise’: The probability of a response occurring in a given situation increases with the number of times that response has occurred in that situation in the past (Pollard *et al.*, 2008, p. 173).

Thorndike was confident in his research and claimed that these ‘laws’ appeared in “every series of experiments on animal learning and the entire history of the management of human affairs” (Thorndike, 1911, p. 244). Despite Thorndike’s claims dating back over one hundred years, these behaviours are still observed in the modern classroom of today. The critical incident demonstrates that a child will know to repeat a certain behaviour (tidying up sensibly) in order to be rewarded, in this instance, with a dojo.

Post the 1960’s, of all contemporary psychologists, B. F. Skinner was perhaps the most honoured and significant in the field of behaviourism (Catania & Harnad, 1988, p. 3).

Through his work with animals, he developed a sophisticated theory which looked at the role stimulus, response, reinforcement and consequence had on learning (Pollard *et al.*, 2008, p.

173). Skinner (1957), as well as Watson (1913), discovered that *classical conditioning*, where new signals are attained for existing responses, could be manufactured to create associations or ‘learning’ (Bartlett & Burton, 2007, p. 99). For example, the stimulus could be a teacher putting their finger on their lips, and the conditioned response would be learners working quietly. The behaviourist theory is one that has been immensely influential in education, especially in the early part of the century, as it provided the foundations for a scientific way of didactically teaching knowledge and skills (Pollard *et al.*, 2008, p. 173). Furthermore, behaviourist learning theory casts the learner in a ‘passive’ role, leaving all aspects of learning activity to the teacher, (Whitebread & Coltman, 2008, p. 2) thus resulting in subject knowledge being communicated in a comprehensive, ordered and logical way, with a structured control of the class (Pollard *et al.*, 2008, p. 173). However, Whitebread and Coltman (1996) write that behaviourist learning theory is a “woefully inadequate explanation of the range and flexibility of the achievements of a human child” (p. 2). Moreover, it needs to be acknowledged whether such teaching connects with the learner’s existing understanding (Pollard *et al.*, 2008, p. 2). The new Welsh Curriculum proposed for 2022 aims to create independent, confident learners who are ready to embrace all aspects of life, which is why it is important for teachers to interact with their pupils to encourage learning, and not simply expose them to subject matter and drill (Pollard *et al.*, 2008, p. 175).

An interesting area of Skinner’s approach is known as *operant conditioning*; a behavioural theory where “rewards and punishments are used within teaching” (Bartlett & Burton, 2007, p. 100). This technique is evidently implemented in the critical incident as the class teacher rewards a child for tidying up their things sensibly. For a number of years, primary schools have adopted the use of stickers, merit stars and (in relation to the critical incident) dojos to reinforce pupil learning. Such positive teaching schemes where children are rewarded for

good behaviour within the classroom was an approach developed by Birmingham psychologists Wheldall and Merrett in the 1980's (Merrett, 1998). More recently, though, operant conditioning has been applied in educational psychology to support children who have special educational needs, (McLeod, 2007) where they can apply a simple, incremental design to their learning (Bartlett & Burton, 2007, p. 100). This could include solving a simple sum, which is followed by positive reinforcement. Even though operant conditioning systems within the classroom have become more sophisticated by focusing more on the social aspects of behaviour, one still needs to acknowledge that such schemes are external to the learner; thus, they do not disclose knowledge of the learner's cognition (Bartlett & Burton, 2007, p. 100). Considering the critical incident and the new Welsh Curriculum, it is interesting to note whether or not the child who received the dojo was tidying up sensibly purely to obtain a reward, or if they knew this was correct behaviour.

Another emergent theme from the critical incident is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (1979). Rogoff (2003) writes that human development is a cultural process, and as a biological species, humans are defined in terms of our cultural participation (p. 3). She explains how humans are prepared by both our cultural and biological heritage to use language and other tools and to learn from each other (Rogoff, 2003, p. 3). Practitioners can apply this notion within the classroom by ensuring the classroom culture is one rich with inclusion and participation. Ecological Systems Theory was a notion that was culminated by Urie Bronfenbrenner during the 1940s, as a result of extensive research into childhood and friendship patterns (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). He conceptualised human development as "the process of understanding and restructuring our ecological environment at successively greater levels of complexity" (Smith and Cowie, 1988, p. 10). Additionally, Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains that "the ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each

inside the next like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The Ecological System bares five layers: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem, arranged from people closest to the individual to people farthest away (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). These nested structures are noticed to have continuing impacts on an individual’s development (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Skinner, 2012). Ecological Systems Theory concentrates on the environmental aspects of development, especially within children (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). In relation to the observations conducted for this analysis, the only influence the researcher could have on a child’s microsystem was their individual interactions. On the contrary, the macrosystem and chronosystem are deemed too vast for an observer to encompass (Skinner, 2012). However, these two nests of the ecological system are interpretable through understanding the social, environment and time factors that influence an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Due to the limited time within the observation school, the researcher was not able to analyse each child’s ecological system in the manner presented above. However, in some circumstances, the researcher was able to understand the rationale behind certain children’s actions, for example, the researcher has access to an Individual Development Plan of a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

As a result of Bronfenbrenner’s research into ecological systems, Baltes (1996) was able to further develop this theory where he subsequently emphasised the life-span nature of development. Complying with the new Welsh Curriculum, viewing child development as something which is lifelong is the key to successful implementation of the curriculum where children are ready to learn throughout their lives (Donaldson, 2015, p. 29).

Recommendations for the next teaching and learning steps

This penultimate section discusses recommendations for the next teaching and learning steps in relation to the critical incident.

To reinforce, the critical incident observed by the researcher was the class teacher rewarding a child with a dojo for tidying up sensibly (see *appendix 7*). Additionally, the teacher ensured the other children could see this reward being given by displaying it on the interactive whiteboard.

Using operant conditioning as a behavioural management strategy is still being implemented in the modern-day classroom, as evidenced by the critical incident – a child was tidying up sensibly and the class teacher rewarded them with a dojo. Due to the nature of the critical incident, the researcher is aware that it will almost certainly arise in their future practice. If such incident did occur in their practice, the researcher would equally enforce rewards within their classroom, but perhaps not for (what is deemed to be) correct behaviour. Although adopting a behaviourist approach within the classroom allows for subject knowledge to be conveyed in an ordered and logical way where the learners take a passive role, (Pollard *et al.*, 2008, p. 173) it does not nurture learner's understanding. It is important for teachers interact and engage with their pupils and encourage learning, as not simply expose them to subject matter and drill as suggested by Pollard *et al* (2008, p. 175). It is for this reason that in future practice, the researcher would not reward children for demonstrating what is deemed as correct behaviour, but instead of trying their best in their learning.

The researcher acknowledges that a behaviourist approach to learning would perhaps be more beneficial in the learning of children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). McLeod (2007)

identifies that in recent years, operant conditioning methods have been applied in educational psychology to support children who require additional help in their learning. The researcher would try and implement these strategies in their future practice where children with ALN can apply a simple, incremental design to their work, just as identified in Bartlett and Burton (2007, p. 100). This way the child can be rewarded for achieving goals at a pace and level that is tailored to their learning; the researcher believes that every child should be praised for their efforts, regardless of their educational capacity, and is something they hope to implement in their future practice.

When discussing future teaching and learning, it is important to consider the importance of reflective practice. Bailey (2012) defines reflective practice as the idea that professionals carefully evaluate their own work, seeking to understand their motives and rationales, as well as their practice, and then attempt to improve upon their work (p. 23). Stanley (1998) emphasises how reflecting upon practice can improve and develop one's teaching methods. The researcher believes it is healthy for practitioners to reflect on their practice which is why future teaching and learning steps have been proposed. In terms of models of reflection, the researcher finds Brookfield's Lenses of Reflection to be an effective reflective strategy to implement when reviewing future practice. This model allows for a comprehensive reflection where you consider: 1) the autobiographical, 2) the student's eye, 3) our colleagues' experiences, and 4) theoretical literature. By reflecting upon practice in this manner, practitioners are able to consider all areas of learning, in order to produce lessons that support these four considerations. For example, the researcher has considered the critical incident through 'our colleagues' eye by making recommendations for their future practice.

Conclusion

In summary, the researcher trusts the approach undertaken for this research and analysis was one that was both effective and ethical in obtaining results. The researcher ensured anonymity and confidentiality to all information concerning the school, staff and children. Additionally, all information was omitted and stored on a password protected network. The use of observation to collect the data was an effective method to implement as it offered the researcher the opportunity to gather first-hand data that is strong in face validity. The researcher recognised that the use of an alternative research method, such as a survey, would prove ineffective as the unique features captured during observation hold the key to understanding a situation. This discussion has provided an effective analysis as to how the critical incident links to the four purposes of the new Welsh Curriculum 2022. A review of the literature surrounding the critical incident has been extensively discussed, with the researcher demonstrating criticality throughout. The researcher has made recommendations for the next teaching and learning steps in their future practice, and has adopted an approach that focuses more on a learner's efforts than their behaviour.

The critical incident analysed within this discussion is an occurrence observed in most primary classrooms. Rewarding a child for demonstrating good behaviour is an educational strategy dating back to Thorndike's research in 1911, and is still being observed today – overtly demonstrated in the critical incident. In relation to the Professional Standards for teaching and leadership in Wales, the researcher trusts they have met the 'pedagogy' standard through demonstrating reflective practice in their work. Additionally, the researcher has identified the importance of being an active part in the child's learning, as opposed to being someone who relays instructions, thus demonstrating an awareness of the 'innovation' teaching standard.

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Alice Stephens

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Appendices

Appendix 1

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES 1

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group: 28/09/2020, 9.15am, Year 1
Lesson details: (Context and focus -/AoLE/subject- is it near start of end of unit of study? Indoors/outdoors? Ability range? Any particularly relevant information). “Squiggle while you wiggle” • The first activity of the day after register was taken. • The children each got a piece of colourful cloth and “squiggled” it while they “wiggled” to a song played from the interactive whiteboard. • This activity got the children ready for learning as it used both sides of their brain, and warmed up their muscles and bodies. • Areas of Learning Experience included Physical Development, Creative Development and Personal and Social Development, Wellbeing and Cultural Diversity. • The activity took place inside the classroom where the children were asked to find a space in any part of the room. • Suitable for all of the children.
Classroom culture (What is the classroom ‘vibe.’? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviours towards learning seem like at this point in time?) • The vibe in the classroom was energetic. • The children’s attitudes towards participation were positive and it was evident they were enthusiastic to learn. • The children were required to copy the teacher for some of the actions so they remained focused throughout the activity, however were encouraged to move freely however they wanted towards the end of the song. • The behaviour of the children remained respectful throughout the activity. • The activity set the perfect tone and environment for the rest of the morning’s learning.
Objectives (What happens in the environment that communicates the purpose of the experiences? What can be observed regarding the way lesson activities relate to these purposes?) • No LO’s were presented as it was an activity to warm the children up and prepare them for learning. • The teacher stood at the front of the classroom and performed the guided actions with the children in order for them to see what was being asked of them. • The children were energetic and laughing, thus informing the teacher and surrounding staff that they were enjoying the activity.

Direction

(What can be observed that helps learners understand what they are engaging in? What in the environment helps them understand how to achieve well)?

- At the front of the classroom there was a flipchart with pictures and words demonstrating the actions required by the children when copying the teacher i.e. up, down and round in a circle. This gave the children a visual aid as well as a verbal one.
- The song that was played during the activity was called 'Firework' so the children were able to identify that the colourful pieces of cloth represented fireworks in the sky.

Access and challenge

(What can be observed in the environment that enables engagement of learners? What can be observed regarding levels of challenge?)

- The children were very enthusiastic to participate in this activity. Observation saw the children laughing, smiling and playing an active role in the activity.
- In terms of the challenges this activity brought, the children could have struggled with moving their arms in opposite ways or with the amount of noise that was present within the classroom; a specific challenge for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Assessment

(Can anything be observed about how student's existing knowledge is used? Can anything be observed regarding the development of knowledge during or after the experience)?

- In this activity, prior knowledge regarding movement would have been used as the children were encouraged to move their bodies freely towards the end of the song.
- Spatial awareness; the children would have had to be aware of how much space they had around them in order to execute the activity without causing harm to any other children.
- In terms of development after the experience, later in the morning the children were asked to take a sheet of A3 paper, and replicate the same actions they did in the earlier task on the paper. They took two pencils and drew lines up and down, and side to side, just like they did with their pieces of cloth. This was effective as the children were able to visually see their actions, while being creative doing so.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

(Are there moments which cause you to consider aspects of practice when you come across them in future teaching)?

- During the activity, one girl got upset. One of the teaching assistants went over to her and reassured her that everything was ok. After a moment the girl continued the activity with the teaching assistant so she was not on her own, and by the end of the song she was smiling like the other children.
- If a situation like this arose in my future teaching, I would make sure that all the children felt comfortable doing this activity and they all knew what to do. I think it is a great way to start they day and prepare the children for the learning ahead.

Appendix 2

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES 2

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group: 28/09/2020, 9.30am, Year 1
Lesson details: (Context and focus -/AoLE/subject- is it near start of end of unit of study? Indoors/outdoors? Ability range? Any particularly relevant information). Responding to a Story: • The children were asked to sit on the carpet facing the interactive whiteboard. • The teacher then went through the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' on a series of PowerPoint slides. • The slides contained minimal text and informative pictures. • Throughout the presentation, the teacher asked the children questions, for example 'why do you think Jack's mother was angry at him?' and the children answered. • After the story was finished, the children were asked to reflect on what they had learnt from the story by using 'thinking hats'. There were 6 thinking hats, each representing something different for the children to reflect upon. They did this by talking to the person they were sitting next to and then sharing their answers with the teacher and rest of the class. • Excellent use of formative assessment – evaluating the children's learning without the children realising they are being tested. • Areas of Learning Experience included Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Knowledge and Understanding of the World. • It was the first time the children had gone through the story in class. • The activity took place inside the classroom on the carpet. • Appropriate for all children.
Classroom culture (What is the classroom 'vibe.'? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviours towards learning seem like at this point in time?) • This activity followed the previous activity of "squiggle while you wiggle" so the classroom vibe was energized. • The children were ready and excited to learn and their attitudes towards the learning was positive and engaging. • Some of the children were perhaps a little too excitable but their behavior was not unacceptable and they remained focused and engaged with the story.
Objectives (What happens in the environment that communicates the purpose of the experiences? What can be observed regarding the way lesson activities relate to these purposes?) • At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher read out the LO's, explaining to the children what they should have learnt by the end of the lesson. • In response, the lesson was then tailored in order for these LO's to be achieved using a series of activities including comprehension tasks and spelling tests. • It was observed that the activities related to the purposes of the lesson as they strengthened and deepened the children's knowledge and understanding of the story and

the surrounding concepts.

Direction

(What can be observed that helps learners understand what they are engaging in? What in the environment helps them understand how to achieve well)?

- The story on the interactive whiteboard was very visual which helped the children understand what they were learning about.
- The visual stimuli additionally showed the emotions of the characters in the story e.g. Jack being scared of the Giant, and his mother being angry at him for trading the cow for magic beans which allowed the children to emphasise with them and understand their motives.
- The teacher and teaching assistants were there to guide the children to succeed in the activities and the story was left on the interactive whiteboard for the children to refer back to whilst completing the work.

Access and challenge

(What can be observed in the environment that enables engagement of learners? What can be observed regarding levels of challenge?)

- By using the 'thinking hats', the children were able to engage with the lesson by considering the feelings of the characters and what were the dangers Jack faced in the story.
- In terms of levels of challenge, the teachers and assistants were already aware of the children that were more than capable to complete this work and the children who perhaps required some extra support. With this, work can be discreetly modified to suit each child's educational capacity.

Assessment

(Can anything be observed about how student's existing knowledge is used? Can anything be observed regarding the development of knowledge during or after the experience)?

- The children's prior knowledge of stories and fairy tales would have helped the children understand the structure of the story e.g. it has a start, middle and end and will be able to recall events in chronological order.
- Additionally, there is a chance that the children had already been familiar with the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' so they would be using their pre-existing schemas of the story to reinforce knowledge.
- The 'thinking hats' were used to formatively assess the children's knowledge of the story.
- Due to Covid-19, the observations were restricted to just one day, so unfortunately, I was unable to observe any further development of this lesson in the following days.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

(Are there moments which cause you to consider aspects of practice when you come across them in future teaching)?

- The use of 'thinking hats' was an extremely effective formative assessment strategy that not only got the children to consider and discuss different factors of the story, but was able to test the children's knowledge and understanding of the story without them being aware they are being tested. This is definitely an AfL strategy I will be implementing in my future practice as a teacher.
- Towards the end of the lesson, a child was rewarded a 'dojo' for tidying up their resources quickly – behaviourist approach to learning.

Appendix 3

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES 3

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group: 28/09/2020, 11am, Year 1
Lesson details: (Context and focus -/AoLE/subject- is it near start of end of unit of study? Indoors/outdoors? Ability range? Any particularly relevant information). Numeracy • From the context and delivery of the lesson, it was evident that this numeracy lesson was in the middle of a unit of study as the children were already familiar with the methods explained and the teacher emphasised that they were reinforcing previous knowledge. • The children were learning about how to double the same number, e.g. $2 \times 2 = 4$, $4 \times 4 = 8$ etc. • The lesson started with a video about the 'double number'. • The video had a song in it. This is an effective means of presenting information to children as they are able to remember the information in a rhythmic way. • After reinforcement of learning, the children participated in a series of activities all surrounding the subject of doubling. For example, one activity involved the children building two equal towers of Lego blocks. • Areas of Learning involved Mathematical Development, Creative Development and Knowledge and Understanding of the World. • The lesson took place inside. • The lesson was suitable for all children and activities could easily be modified to play to the children numerical strengths.
Classroom culture (What is the classroom 'vibe.'? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviors towards learning seem like at this point in time?) • This lesson took place after snack time, so the children were rested and calm, yet energetic to learn as they had just had refueled with a drink of milk and a piece of fruit. • The children were confident in their answers and were keen to contribute in the lesson as they were familiar with subject area.
Objectives (What happens in the environment that communicates the purpose of the experiences? What can be observed regarding the way lesson activities relate to these purposes?) • At the beginning of the lesson, the learning objectives were presented to the children, highlighting that the purpose of the lesson was to reinforce and develop on previous knowledge of the subject area. • The learning objectives were met through multiple activities all based on the subject of doubling, as well as through the means of a video the teacher presented to the children at the beginning of the lesson.
Direction (What can be observed that helps learners understand what they are engaging in? What in the environment helps them understand how to achieve well?)

- Each activity was supported by a member of staff within the classroom who demonstrated to the children what they needed to do in order to achieve well.
- The adult encouraged the children to challenge themselves and praised them when they had successfully completed an activity. This reassures the children that they have understood the task and have done it correctly.

Access and challenge

(What can be observed in the environment that enables engagement of learners? What can be observed regarding levels of challenge?)

- The lesson was very tactile, so the engagement of the children was observed through the models and towers they made.
- The observation saw that all of the children enjoyed this lesson as it was very visual and creative.
- At points, the children worked together to complete the activities.
- Due to the nature of the activities, they could easily be adapted to support each child's academic ability so that every child could achieve.

Assessment

(Can anything be observed about how student's existing knowledge is used? Can anything be observed regarding the development of knowledge during or after the experience?)

- The entirety of the lesson was based on reinforcing and developing the children's prior knowledge of doubling.
- By having an adult supporting each activity, they were able to formatively assess the children purely through watching them. If the child could successfully complete the activity, with minimal or no assistance, then the adult can confirm that the child has understood how to double numbers, and also apply their knowledge.
- The skill of doubling numbers is one that will be transferred and used throughout the children's time in education and also in daily life – ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

(Are there moments which cause you to consider aspects of practice when you come across them in future teaching?)

- One of the resources used in the lesson was Lego. A few children went off task and started playing with the Lego bricks instead of using them for their intended purpose in the lesson (building towers of equal size).
- To avoid this in the future, I would use a resource that was associated more with Mathematics, for example, multi-link.

Appendix 4

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES 4

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group: 28/09/2020, 1.30pm, Year 1
Lesson details: (Context and focus -/AoLE/subject- is it near start of end of unit of study? Indoors/outdoors? Ability range? Any particularly relevant information). Learning about Internet Safety/Outdoor play Internet Safety: • The aim of the lesson was to teach the children about being safe on the internet. • The children were sat on the carpet in front of the interactive whiteboard. • In order to educate the children about Internet safety, the teacher told them a story that highlighted what/what not to do when you're are on the internet. • Using a story was an effective method in presenting the information about internet safety as the children were able to relate to it and visualise how the information is relevant in their everyday lives. • After the story, the children spoke to their partner about the key messages in the story, and then fed back to the teacher – formative assessment technique. • The children took part in a range of internet safety activities. • Areas of Learning Experience included Language, Literacy and Communication Skills, Knowledge and Understanding of the World and Creative Development. • The teacher eluded to work the children had previously done about internet safety in their previous school year. • The lesson took place indoors. • Suitable for all children. Outdoor play: • The activities related to the internet safety lesson were rotated in the classroom alongside outside play. • When the children were not engaging in an activity within the classroom, they were allowed to play outside, and then were called in when it was their turn to complete the internet safety activities. • Having time to play outside encourages creative and physical development, and nurtures their health and wellbeing.
Classroom culture (What is the classroom 'vibe.'? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviors towards learning seem like at this point in time?) • At first, the classroom culture seemed a little unsettled because the children had just come in from lunch time play. It did not take long, though, for the teacher to engage the children in the lesson and for them to be focused and contributive. • The children's attitudes towards the learning were positive and interactive as they were able to make connections between the story and real-life situations. • It was apparent that the children realized the seriousness of the topic in discussion and were effectively able to identify what was right and wrong in the story. • During the outdoor play sessions, the children were lively and full of energy, taking

advantage of all of the resources available, for example, a washing up station.

Objectives

(What happens in the environment that communicates the purpose of the experiences? What can be observed regarding the way lesson activities relate to these purposes?)

- The learning objectives were clearly presented at the beginning of the lesson and read out loud to the children so they could understand what they were about to learn about (Internet Safety).
- The purposes and objectives of the lesson were primarily met through a story about internet safety and the subsequently reinforced through various activities including drawing and writing.
- The outdoor play aspect did not have any learning objectives or success criteria.

Direction

(What can be observed that helps learners understand what they are engaging in? What in the environment helps them understand how to achieve well?)

- The lesson was very visual; a multitude of pictures were used to give context to the learning and enabled the children to make links between the story and real-life.
- Pictures of phones, computers and familiar online platforms like Instagram were on the screen for the children to understand what they were learning about.
- When the children were playing outdoors, there were a multitude of resources they could engage with.

Access and challenge

(What can be observed in the environment that enables engagement of learners? What can be observed regarding levels of challenge?)

- Throughout the story, the teacher was asking the children lots of questions such as “who can tell me who you should ask if you want to download an app online?”.
- Questioning enables students to engage with the lesson and share their thoughts.
- Some children might have a more comprehensive understanding of technology and the safety around it than other children.
- Observation of the outdoor play saw that the children were happy and were enjoying playing with their friends outside, which highlighted positive engagement.

Assessment

(Can anything be observed about how student’s existing knowledge is used? Can anything be observed regarding the development of knowledge during or after the experience?)

- At the beginning of lesson, the teacher reminded the children that they had previously looked at internet safety in their previous school year. Most of the children seemed to be familiar with some of the concepts, however the information did seem to be new for some children.
- The children’s development of knowledge was evident throughout the lesson as they became more confident with their answers to the questions.
- By the end of the lesson the children were able to recall the main points about being safe on the internet.
- In terms of development after the lesson, internet safety is something that the children will continue to implement both at school and at home, and their knowledge of how to be safe on the internet will only grow deeper as they get older and more technologically advanced.

Alice Stephens
2005335
ECAD6007

- Learning through play is at the core of the Foundation Phase, so by allowing the children time to play outside, they can develop their skills. For example, their problem-solving skills and ability to work in a team.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

(Are there moments which cause you to consider aspects of practice when you come across them in future teaching)?

- The use of questioning to engage the learners was a really effective strategy that I intend to implement in my future teaching.
- The children were on the carpet for a considerable amount of time, so the child with ADHD became distracted very quickly. However, to avoid the other children from becoming distracted by this child, one of the teaching assistants took the child into a separate room and continued the work one-on-one.
- During the outdoor play session, a child was struggling to connect some blocks together. They tried different ways to do it and they eventually succeeded in connecting them the way they wanted. The child demonstrated excellent perseverance skills.

Appendix 5

CRITICAL INCIDENT IDENTIFICATION RECORD 1

Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	Date: 28/09/2020 Time: 2:45pm Age: Between 5 and 6 – Year 1 class Children involved: 1 child Contextual information: • The critical incident took place outside during outdoor element of the internet safety lesson. • The child was engaging in outdoor play; an aspect the Foundation Phase focuses heavily on in order to promote and encourage learning (Learning through play). • When the children were not engaging in activities within the classroom regarding internet safety, they were given the option to play outside. • Areas of Learning Experience included Creative Development and Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity – boosting personal confidence and trying out different problem-solving methods.
<i>What happened? A detailed description of what you observed and what thoughts on pedagogy and practice occurred to you as a result, looking towards your research.</i>	During an outdoor play session, the observer noticed a child playing with inter-connecting blocks. It was evident they were trying to build something specific and was having trouble connecting the final blocks to create their desired shape. The observer watched the child for a couple of minutes as they tried to figure out how to connect all the blocks. Throughout the observation, the child did not get agitated that they were struggling to connect the blocks, instead they remained calm and was activity trying out different methods in order to connect the blocks. Eventually, the child managed to connect the blocks and then proceeded to play with the shape they had created. The child in this critical incident demonstrated excellent perseverance skills as even though they were struggling with connecting the blocks, they did not give up and eventually succeeded in the task they were aiming to complete. It was evident their satisfaction in completing the activity was heightened by the fact they persevered. In terms of the 4 purposes of the new Welsh Curriculum, this observed critical incident links to children being ‘ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives’. The child demonstrated how through persevering with a task and trying their best, they succeeded. These skills can be transferred into all aspects of life, and will be something children continue to do throughout their lives. Additionally, this critical incident links to the purpose of children being ‘enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work’. The child was creative and methodological in their strategies to figure out the best way to connect the blocks. They also used their initiative and

Alice Stephens
2005335
ECAD6007

	previous knowledge to figure out what they needed to do in order to get the result they wanted. Being creative is a skill children really thrive at and are enthusiastic to try out different ways of doing something.
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Appendix 6

CRITICAL INCIDENT IDENTIFICATION RECORD 2

Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	Date: 28/09/2020 Time: 2:15pm Age: Between 5 and 6 years-old – Year 1 class Children involved: 1 child Contextual information: • The critical incident took place inside the classroom while the teacher was asking the children questions about the internet safety story. • The story was effective as the children were able to make links between the story and real-life. • Areas of Learning Experience included Language, Literacy and Communication Skills.
<i>What happened? A detailed description of what you observed and what thoughts on pedagogy and practice occurred to you as a result, looking towards your research.</i>	The teacher asked a question to the class and a child put their hand up to answer. The teacher chose this child to give their answer, however, when they were chosen, the did not provide an answer straight away. It was evident that the child was thinking hard about what the answer could be, but before they could give an answer, the teacher asked another child for their answer, and then moved onto another question. The observer noticed the child became quite disheartened when the teacher did not allow them time or the opportunity to give an answer. With actions like this, the teacher could be knocking the child's confidence to answer other questions in class, in fear they will be dismissed or their answer will be wrong. Learners should be encouraged contribute their answers in class discussions, even if they are not 100% accurate. In response to the New Welsh Curriculum, teachers should be encouraging learners to be 'healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society'; one of the 4 purposes of the new Welsh Curriculum. Linking this to the critical incident, it is important for teachers to give every learner equal opportunity to contribute in class so that they become confident and active members of the school society.

Appendix 7

CRITICAL INCIDENT IDENTIFICATION RECORD 3

Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	Date: 28/09/2020 Time: 10:10am Age: Between 5 and 6 – Year 1 class Children involved: 1 child Contextual information: • The critical incident took place inside the classroom towards the end of the literacy lesson. • The class teacher told the children it was time to tidy away their things and get ready for snack time. • Areas of Learning Experience included Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Knowledge and Understanding of the World.
<i>What happened? A detailed description of what you observed and what thoughts on pedagogy and practice occurred to you as a result, looking towards your research.</i>	As it was the end of the lesson, the class teacher asked all the children to tidy away the resources they were using and get ready for snack time. Naturally, with the prospect of food, the classroom environment quickly became excitable. The observer witnessed the class teacher rewarding a child with a ‘dojo’ for tidying away their things quietly and sensibly. The class teacher ensured that all of the other children could see that this child was rewarded a ‘dojo’ for tidying away appropriately in the hope they would do the same, especially if there was an incentive to do so. Here, the child is demonstrating self-efficacy where they can independently tidy away their things. Being self-efficient within the classroom is a skill that can be transferred into everyday life. This critical incident links to the purpose of ‘all children and young people will be healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of the society’ because being independent can lead to increased confidence. Also, by encouraging learners to be independent, practitioners are providing them with the skills needed to play a full part in life and work; a key feature of the purpose that children will be ‘enterprising, creative contributors’.

Appendix 8

CRITICAL INCIDENT IDENTIFICATION RECORD 4

Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	Date: 28/09/2020 Time: 11:15am Age: Between 5 and 6 – Year 1 class Children involved: 1 child Contextual information: • The critical incident took place inside the classroom during a numeracy lesson. • The children were learning about doubling the same number e.g. $2 \times 2 = 4$, $4 \times 4 = 8$ etc. • All children were sat on the carpet in front of the interactive whiteboard following the teacher's instructions. • Areas of Learning Experience included Mathematical Development, Creative Development and Knowledge and Understanding of the World.
<i>What happened? A detailed description of what you observed and what thoughts on pedagogy and practice occurred to you as a result, looking towards your research.</i>	During the Maths lesson while the children were on the carpet, a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) got up from the carpet and went to do some colouring on the other side of the classroom. The child was not disruptive in doing this; however, some children noticed and asked the teacher the child was doing this. The teacher answered quickly, whilst trying to maintain the children's focus on the lesson. The Learning Support Assistant (LSA) sat with the child who was colouring and then went through some work with them individually. In this instance, the child was not disruptive and got on with their own thing quietly. However, some children with ASD can disrupt the class when they do not want to do the work that the teacher is explaining. This then hinders the other children's learning. Practitioners need to be adaptable to meet the needs of every pupil in the class which is why having a LSA within the classroom is really useful for children with Additional Learning Needs because they can work at a pace that suits them with the necessary support.