

Ychwanegwch eich targedau o'ch aseiniad diwethaf (Ond yn berthnasol os yr ydych wedi cwblhau aseiniad) / Please add your targets from the previous assignment (Only relevant if you have completed an assignment)

Targed/Target 1	
Targed/Target 2	
Targed/Target 3	

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

Introduction

A critical incident is a moment of change in a learning environment, where something out of the ordinary occurs. Tripp sums up a critical incident as “an interpretation of the significance of an event” (2012, p.8). A critical incident is not necessarily a negative event even though the name could be perceived as such – the term ‘critical’ instead referring to how significantly the event is deemed to have influenced the individual. Therefore, for us to deem something as a critical incident we must see it as a valuable incident, and that is why the concept is important.

The use of critical incidents in the context of reflective practice in teaching is necessary. Tripp (2012) notes that for a teacher to be analytical about their practice, they must be able to interpret critical incidents as they arise and be able to use professional judgement to dissect the situation.

In this evaluation of a critical incident observed during a school visit, I will critically examine the theories surrounding behaviour management. I will compare models such as Assertive Discipline, Logical Consequences and Behaviour Modification and reflect on how they differ with models developed by Ginott and Kounin. I will also be looking at theories around effective questioning and how this impacts participation in a lesson. I will be addressing these ideas through the lens of the critical incident as I explore areas of the new curriculum for Wales, Donaldson's four purposes and the professional teaching standards.

I will discuss the role played by critical reflection and how reflective models are useful as tools in reflective practice, comparing the different models in their approach and ease of use for educators. I will go on to recommend next steps for my personal development as a practitioner and where I would like to be moving towards as a teacher of mathematics.

The role of critical reflection

Being able to critically reflect is a necessary tool in order to develop teaching practice both amongst your peers as well as your own performance as a practitioner. Regular critical reflection is important because of what it can achieve for your current practice, provoking you to constantly adapt how you think and see things inside and outside the classroom, growing your skills and enhancing your knowledge in areas you may not be so familiar with.

A way in which this can be done is by critically reflecting through models which guide your thought process. Kolb (1984), Gibbs (1988), Schön (1991) and Brookfield (1995) all present different reflective models that have an influence on educators presently.

The Learning Cycle reflection model presented by Kolb (1984) can be described as “an experimental learning theory”. Kolb summaries the cycle as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (2015, p.91) where information is absorbed by the learner and lessons are learned before taking the new information back into a practical setting for a new experience to repeat the reflective cycle.

Whereas the Gibbs (1988) model is a six stage approach to an experience: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusions and action plan. The Gibbs model is designed to break down thought processes to a more intimate level than the Kolb model.

The model presented by Schön (1991) is a lot more simplistic in nature as he presents two points of reflection to consider: ‘reflection in action’ and ‘reflection on action’. This method of critical reflection asks you to reflect while the experience is ongoing. Therefore, it gives the unique perspective of being able to act on a reflection immediately while still in the same experience, and not just waiting for the next experience of a similar type to occur.

Lastly, Brookfield (1995) suggests in his reflective model that one think about the experience from the viewpoint of four different “lenses”. The lenses to engage with are the personal experience, the students’ view, the colleagues’ view and the theoretical. Brookfield (2017,

p.77) is looking to provide teachers with four exclusive viewpoints with his reflective model that are easily accessible to all practitioners. However, he admits some may not be always available due to constraints such as time.

Whilst these models provide helpful frameworks around reflection, reflection can happen in a magnitude of ways. As we look at the wider context in Wales, there have been a number of reforms which aid the practice of critical reflection. The role of teaching in Wales is currently being challenged and developed, in part due to the curriculum reform in Wales (Welsh Government, 2020a) which is another resource that can be used to take stock and critically reflect, along with the five Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership (Welsh Government, 2017).

These five different standards: Pedagogy, Collaboration, Professional Learning, Innovation and Leadership (Welsh Government, 2017) sum up what it means to be an effective teacher against the backdrop of the new curriculum in Wales. Each standard highlights a different area for practitioners to grow both personally and as a group of practitioners. Regardless of how long practitioners have been teaching, it is an expectation that they will be constantly reflecting and learning together.

Observation: School & Class context

BERA (2018) guidelines have been adopted in this evaluation of a critical incident to provide anonymity to the school, staff and pupils involved.

The school where the observation of the critical incidents happened is an English-medium state school admitting pupils aged 11-18 years old of mixed-gender. The secondary school is based in the local authority of Monmouthshire. The school had been removed from the list of schools requiring review during the pandemic (Estyn, 2020). The number of pupils enrolled is 977 including 220 in the sixth form (Estyn, 2017). 11% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average for Wales of 20.9% (Welsh Government, 2021). As of the latest full Estyn (2017) report, less than 1% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales and very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background. There are around 12% of pupils with a special educational need which is much lower than the national average of 22.7%. Around 3% of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is close to the national average of 2.8%.

In terms of the new curriculum, there were signposts all over the school. It was also clear from speaking to staff members that they were engaging with the new curriculum and it was very much present in the school. Notably, there were posters of the four purposes in classrooms and these played a big part of the assembly I was able to observe at the start of the day.

The specific lesson in which the critical incident took place was a year 9 Welsh class during period two, which is the lesson just before break-time in this school. It was a Wednesday and the pupils in this class had already had Welsh once that week and were due to have it again later in the week. Before the lesson the teacher spoke to those of us observing about the expectations he had for this class. He informed us that he views the class as being C/D borderline ability and he also notified us of the behavioural issues that are present in the class, which was a mixture of failures to arrive on time and mild to moderate disruptive behaviour.

Critical incident linked to Donaldson's Four Purposes

During the lesson, there was a disengaged pupil with his head on the desk for the first 15 minutes of the lesson, looking away from the teacher. The pupil in question did not take part in the fast-paced starter where the teacher did quick-fire questions and picked on students to answer the questions. I thought it was odd that the teacher did not raise with the pupil his attitude to the lesson, so at this point I checked the seating plan which I had been given to learn pupils' names, and noticed it had SEN written next to this particular pupils name.

Once the starter activity was over the teacher had moved the class onto the written task for the lesson. This is the critical incident I am engaging with, the pupil in question then preceded to lift his head from the desk and asked the teacher a question related to the work.

The pupil here demonstrates being an 'enterprising, creative contributor' which is one of Donaldson's Four Purposes of the new curriculum (Welsh Government, 2020b). They seek the teachers help to get involved, as they "identify and grasp opportunities" (Welsh Government, 2020b).

The teacher then preceded to ask the exact same question back to the pupil using effective questioning to impact participation. This links to one of the five professional standards for teaching and leadership (Welsh Government, 2017) as the teacher was able to use 'Pedagogy' effectively in this incident to influence the pupil and present them with a suitable

challenge and expectation by throwing the situation back to the pupil for them to answer the question. The pupil was able to answer the question competently and after positive affirmation from the teacher the pupil grew in confidence for the rest of the lesson and was fully engaged, asking a lot more questions. Not once again did the pupil put their head on the table and become disengaged.

The critical incident can be linked to two further purposes. The pupil is effectively able to show they are a “ambitious, capable learners who: are questioning and enjoy solving problems, and can communicate effectively in different forms and settings, using both Welsh and English” (Welsh Government, 2020b). The pupil demonstrated the latter statement linked to the purpose by posing their question in both the medium of English and Welsh effectively, interchanging as necessary. The pupil was then able to show real growth as an example of “healthy, confident individuals who: face and overcome challenge” (Welsh Government, 2020b) as they showed courage to speak up and get involved in the lesson.

What was underlying in this critical incident was the fact that the teacher has come up with an effective way of dealing with this pupil. There is experience and understanding of the pupil's behaviour, which has informed his decision making. It was clear it was not just a missed incident (letting the child be disengaged with his head on the table) because of how the teacher dealt with other behavioural issue that arose throughout the lesson from the other pupils in a direct and effective way. It was clear the teacher had a plan for each pupil and how to manage them.

Literature Review

Behaviour management is an essential part of a teacher's skill in controlling the classroom and is not an area of teaching where mastery can ever be assumed. Rather, there is always more that can be learned, whether that is through research, from observations in a practical environment or through personal experience as Brookfield (2017) alludes to with his reflective model. Looking into behaviour management theories further, the complexity of the topic becomes apparent as it deals with everything from creating a positive learning environment and setting appropriate boundaries that make the children feel successful, to dealing with the worst offenders in the class and defining what is classed as ‘appropriate’ discipline.

Kounin presents the idea that the “ways teachers handle misbehavior once it occurs are not the keys to successful classroom management, but rather what teachers do to prevent

management problems from occurring in the first place” (Hastie et al. 2007, p.298). Hastie et al. (2007) go on to say that the Kounin model has many key characteristics, two such ideas are “withitness” and “overlapping” (Hastie et al. 2007). ‘Withitness’ is the principle that the teacher is knowledgeable to everything going on around them and communicates that effectively to their students. ‘Overlapping’ is the ability of the teacher to handle multiple issues that could be occurring at the same time.

Martella et al. (2012, p.17) argues that the Kounin model for behaviour management is good for dealing with low level disruptions to the classroom and they point to the further research it has inspired. However, they disagree with it being sufficient for all behavioural issues as they argue it does not give effective teachers an answer for students who will continue to be a distraction and misbehave regardless. They argue a complete approach to behaviour management could take aspects of the Kounin model “but would also need many more components to be effective for the most difficult-to-manage students” (Martella et al. 2012, p.17).

While the Kounin model is a proactive style, a contrasting viewpoint to this is the idea of ‘Behaviour Modification’ (Palardy, 1996) which is a reactive style of managing behaviour. Behaviour Modification is the idea of trying to condition a behaviour as it is happening to make it more desirable. However, there are limitations to this known to the author, as Palardy suggests it is “treating the symptoms, not the causes” (1996, p.67).

Assertive Discipline is similar to Behaviour Modification, and has a four-step plan for dealing with negative actions: identify what needs changing, find its opposite behaviour, reward the positive version and use negative consequences to remove the negative behaviour (Palardy, 1996). What is significant in this text is that Palardy then suggests two contrasting viewpoints about the legitimacy of assertive discipline. He references Canter who says from a research standpoint, assertive discipline plays out successfully and “isn't just a quick-fix solution” (1989, p.61), whereas Palardy then gives a personal view that assertive discipline alone “does not work in many situations, with many students, and under many circumstances” (1996, p.67). Palardy’s view, coupled with Martella et al.’s view of the Kounin model, leads you to believe that one model of behavioural management is not sufficient, and a collaboration of models is needed. It is also interesting to note the different outcomes here depending on the viewpoint. Canter (1989) has critically reflected on the model through the research and theory lens, whereas Palardy (1996) has critically reflected through his personal experience. These are two of Brookfield’s (1995) four lenses for a reflective model as mentioned in the role of critical reflection section.

Another behavioural management philosophy that is well-known and has been looked at extensively is the three types of consequences: natural, arbitrary and logical. Perhaps the most famous of these is the idea of logical consequences, where the punishment a student receives is indirect correlation to the negative behaviour they have displayed. For example, if a pupil does not do their homework, the logical consequence is that they stay behind for detention to do their homework. While this sounds good in theory, Martella et al. (2012) give many reasons why this may not be the best practice if used in isolation, which is a familiar theme amongst all of these models. Their biggest problem is with the assumption that a logical consequence will create more appropriate behaviour (Martella et al. 2012, p.12) – indeed without evidence that this is true, it cannot be assumed. Therefore, what they suggest is for logical consequences to be awarded for appropriate behaviour at the same time. In practice, doing this could set a bad precedent if you get into a situation with a pupil where you are stuck in this system of logical consequences, for both good and bad behaviour. This is because, having to constantly award good behaviour with a logical consequence will never truly tell the teacher if the student has learnt why what they are doing is good, or if they are just looking for the appropriate consequence.

An appropriate logical consequence to always use, however, is positive language because of its other associated benefits. A different perspective to consider is the Ginott model of behaviour management theory. This model presents the idea that the climate of the classroom is led by the teacher and the boundaries they set will promote positive or negative behaviour (Manning and Bucher, 2001). The Ginott model focusses strongly on language and the message a teacher's language gives to the students.

One of Ginott's ideas is how clear communication between teacher and pupil is necessary for a working relationship to form (Manning and Bucher, 2001). While the language Ginott suggests using is positive, he is not referring to praise as he suggests that could lead to a dependency among students (Martella et al. 2012). Therefore, according to Ginott's model positive language can still be deployed in situations where negative behaviour is being displayed. It is clear, that Ginott's model leaves room for a working relationship to form with students who present with either positive or negative behaviour. It is worth noting, however, Ginott does not go as far as to suggest teachers should not praise students at all, but rather sets tight parameters for the usefulness of praise, conceding "praise is positive if that praise is used judiciously and made specific" (Martella et al. 2012, p.16).

I will now reflect upon the critical incident I observed in light of these models.

Reflection / Evaluation & Next Steps

With regards to behaviour and managing it in the classroom, this is an area I am going to research a lot further as I feel I have only just dented the surface of how many theories and practices there are. I hope to become a more knowledgeable practitioner on the matter. In the immediate future, however, and as next steps of my development as a teacher, I will draw from what I learnt from reflecting on the practices of Ginott and model some of the ideas in the classroom.

After reading and reflecting on Ginott, it has changed my approach to my perception of language and has influenced how I will practice teaching and develop learning in a behavioural context. I can see how the use of language by the practitioner can set the tone in the room from the beginning of a lesson, and how a positive culture will yield positive results more often than negative results.

The teacher I observed during the critical incident did this very positively, his language and attitude is something that has stuck with me as being a positive learning experience for the pupils. He was assertive when he needed to be, understanding at times, and never sent the message that he was not on the side of the students. Rather, he clearly had a working relationship with individual members of the class, that he could draw on to manage behaviour in various ways. Ginott convincingly posits that when negative language is used, there is little benefit for the practitioner – if language has negative connotations, you can set a negative tone with the class that can be very hard to recover from. There was room for the practitioner to use negative language with the student when he was disengaged from the class, however, due to his good management of the situation, he refrained from this. This was absolutely central to the learner then feeling able to position himself as confident and capable by engaging the teacher in a question. I also reflect that the practitioner did not use praise, yet his language was positive when he reaffirmed the learner had the correct answer.

Palardy sums up well, “Students’ misbehavior has always been and will always be a thorn in the sides of even the best of overworked teachers” (1996, p.70). However, the evidence is clear that this is all the more reason to counter the problem with a positive response, otherwise it can become a never-ending battle where as a practitioner you will just be heading in a downward spiral of negative thoughts and actions.

I realise that as I take my learning forward, I will find myself in situations where it may not be straightforward to apply these theories and methods and thus I will need to spend time adapting this method to suit each unique incident. I will further need to employ reflective practice to improve my application, in particular the reflective model of Schön (1991) as I can see reflection in action being useful as I try out different behaviour management models. I think this because there will be moments where an immediate response or change of course is needed so being able to be critically reflective in the moment will be a valuable skill to have at my disposal.

Through conducting research and exploring the ideas of behaviour management theories further, I have been able to critically reflect on and answer a number of questions I had after reviewing all of the critical incidents that occurred during the observation day. One question I was able to answer for myself in the literature review was 'how can you manage a classroom effectively and fairly when it has both well-behaved and misbehaved children in the same class?'. Although I had observed that this was possible in practice whilst observing the critical incident, my understanding of how I personally can manage a classroom effectively and fairly was greatly improved. A further question I asked myself was 'are discipline and classroom management the same thing?' I now see there are preventative measures at my disposal to manage a class before discipline is ever needed.

I will be taking forward into my next steps as a teacher the techniques I have learnt about structuring reflections. As I have been doing reflections on the three critical incidents I observed as well as other in-school observations, I can see myself starting to use the four reflective models highlighted earlier without realising it. They are starting to become a part of my natural response to new situations and I see this as the role of critical reflection in a reflective practitioner in Wales.

Conclusion

In this evaluation of a critical incident, the approach I have taken was to highlight areas I felt were key to aiding the learning environment and culture I observed. I was able to critically reflect on the five new Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership (Welsh Government, 2017). Through the reflective lens of looking at 'Pedagogy', I have been able to refine my approach to teaching and I have seen how important being able to influence learners is, in order to help them advance and progress in their understanding. I have also conducted 'Professional Learning' by looking at theories and researching the holistic

development of children to increase my knowledge and personal understanding as I move forwards as a reflective practitioner in Wales.

The literature I explored stemmed specifically from the reflections of the critical incident I observed. I saw a gap in my pedagogy relating to behaviour management and the use of language and questioning as I saw it in action.

My research findings led me to the conclusion, matched by Martella et al. (2012) and Palardy (1996), that the best course of action is to approach the classroom with a range of theories on an area of pedagogy, whether that is behavioural management theories or a different concept. One approach will not be enough to define a reflective practitioner. That is because the role is in part the ability to switch between different approaches depending on the climate in the classroom, as appropriate in the moment, being able to diagnostically reflect and adapt to the situation.

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Appendices

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

Record 1

Date and time, year group: 22.9.21, 10am – 11am, Year 9

Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context

- Welsh class
- C/D borderline
- Just before breaktime (Period 2)
- Class size: 25

What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work)

- Disengaged child, head on desk, lasted for approx. 15 minutes
- Why has the teacher not queried this? – SEN on the register next to his name
- Fast-paced activity over, written task – child lifts head and asks teacher question about the topic
- Teacher asks exact same question back to child, child answers confidently, looks happy
- Child is fully engaged in lesson, asking questions, getting involved, completely different character to who walked in

Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be “under the hood” in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider?

- Teacher knows the pupil well, has experience with this class, understands the needs of the child – decision making based on relationship with pupil
- Teacher let the child be disengaged – what the child needed, maybe he had a hard lesson the lesson before?
- Pedagogy: influence the learner with a suitable challenge and expectation, encouraged child to answer question back
- Behaviour Management theories
- Creating a positive learning environment
- Setting appropriate boundaries
- ALN – currently have gaps in knowledge of this area

Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here)

- Class is loud but not out of control
- Disruptive behaviour – 5 different people arrived late at varying degrees of lateness – teacher positively dealt with each occurrence.

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES**Record 2**

Date and time, year group: 22.9.21, 10am – 11am, Year 9

Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context

- Welsh class
- C/D borderline
- Just before breaktime (Period 2)
- Class size: 25

What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work)

- 2 Boys walk into class 4 minutes late,
- Teacher questions boys whereabouts, they respond they were in the toilet
- Tone of boys were trying to be 'funny' and 'smart'
- Teacher not happy boys took 4 minutes of his time, so he informed them both they would be staying for 4 minutes of breaktime
- Manner in which teacher dealt with incident limited the disruption to rest of class
- Teacher dealt with situation positively and calmly, the way he spoke made the other learners not feel like they had to look up from their task and could carry on
- Teacher was also swift with how he dealt with situation

Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be "under the hood" in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider?

- Behaviour Management theories again
- Looking in detail at Logical Consequences
- Also, effective choice of language and communication skills

Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here)

- School has emphasis on making sure lessons start on time, regardless of if the whole class have turned up.
- Incident was linked to school assembly for Year 9's observed earlier in the day (year group CI is about), school values was the theme of the talk
- These boys will have heard how students need to take responsibility for their learning, which includes turning up on time
- Teacher reinforces assembly teaching with punishment

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES**Record 3**

Date and time, year group: 22.9.21 , 11:20am - 12:20am, Year 8

Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context

- Science class
- Practical lesson, doing teacher led experiments and pupils recording data
- Just after breaktime (Period 3)
- Class size: 29

What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work)

- Loud class, teacher very much in control however
- Plenty of participation from class
- Teacher asked a question but didn't specify if they wanted hands up
- 29 pupils start shouting loudly different answers at him
- Bit of a mess
- Teacher calls 3,2,1 in Welsh to silence class, admits mistake, encourages class to put hands up
- Proceeds to pick at least 10 different pupils from around the room for answers
- Answers are amazing, and now everyone can hear them

Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be "under the hood" in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider?

- Effective questioning to impact participation
- Communication and language skills
- How positive and infectious attitude as teacher can rub off onto class
- Use of Welsh language in English-medium schools, how a different language can be really effective for control

Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here)

- Pupils are using mobile phones as stopwatches, could be cause for distraction
- There is always a lot going on in science classroom (equipment etc.)
- Big class for size of room, every seat taken up, felt crowded