

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

During their time in education, children will have experiences that will impact the progression of their learning. These everyday occurrences could be disregarded as mundane or unimportant.

However, when these occurrences are observed through the lens of research and theoretical literature, they can signify the implementation of current educational trends. This reframes the occurrence as a critical incident; According to Tripp, these incidents can be defined as commonplace events occurring in routine professional practice which are “indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures”(Tripp, 2011, p.25).

To further understand this phenomenon, an incident that has occurred in a real-life classroom will be evaluated critically to identify which of these “underlying trends and structures”(Tripp, 2011, p.25) are present in the learning environment. From this, it can then be analysed as to how these are contributing to future teaching and learning steps. During the evaluation, the chosen incident will be assessed through the lens of Donaldson’s New Curriculum for Wales, an underlying structure which is currently being implemented in schools. Alongside this, relevant theoretical literature will be reviewed to give contextual relevance to the observation and to understand the underlying trends present in the classroom.

Moreover, to begin this evaluation, the school and classroom environment will be considered; Contextual factors such as socio-economics, age and ability will be discussed to provide further understanding of the learning environment. Following this, the methodology selected for the evaluation will be justified through a discussion of key literature which will detail its strengths and weaknesses. The chosen classroom incident will then be detailed with a consideration of whether Donaldson’s New Curriculum is present and being implemented. From this, a literature review

analysing relevant research phenomenon within the chosen classroom will follow, providing theoretical context for the evaluation. Finally, there will be a reflection and subsequent conclusion which will consider the influence of critical reflection on future teaching.

Observation

Before discussing information surrounding the school environment, it is important to note that the evaluation was carried out in accordance with BERA guidelines. All involved participants during the observation were treated with respect, and confidentiality was upheld throughout the evaluation in respect of both school pupils and staff (BERA, 2019). The observation took place in a year seven class during their numeracy lesson at a Welsh Secondary school. The class was of mixed-ability, with pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) also being present. The lesson took place in an ICT suite with all pupils having access to a computer, and it was clear that the children were familiar with their learning space and the routines relevant to it.

The school itself was small, having only four-hundred-and-thirty-eight pupils across five year groups (WalesOnline, 2019). The school sees 29.2% of pupils being eligible for free school meals and 3.3% of pupils having English as an additional language (WalesOnline, 2019). Additionally, the school has an Additional Learning Needs (ALN) unit which is regularly revised to meet the SEN code of practice requirements (██████████ 2020). Further, the school's previous Estyn inspection stated that the school provided outstanding care, support and guidance which saw all pupils achieve high levels of wellbeing (Estyn, 2019).

An additional contextual issue that needs to be addressed is current world events. Due to this observation taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were unforeseen variables such as altered school attendance and unusual classroom practice which may have impacted the effectiveness of the evaluation.

Methodology

The evaluation itself is based on a single-lesson observation. Therefore, it was decided that the most appropriate form of research for this study was qualitative since it applies itself to non-numerical, limited data. The value of this model is supported by Baxter and Jack who state that it allows for an observation of specific concepts within their context (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p.544). This is extended by Bhandari, who argues that qualitative research allows for in-depth understanding of certain concepts and experiences (Bhandari, 2020). However, it is important to note that there are constraints to this approach, with Travers arguing that the nature of the model which sees a smaller application within a local setting can lead to a limited contribution to our understanding (Travers, 2001, p.7). Nevertheless, this form of research is still valuable and due to the volume of data available is the most appropriate in this case.

Furthermore, a qualitative research approach can be taken using one of five research designs; Narrative research, grounded theory, phenomenology, participatory action research, and case study (Creswell et al., 2007, p.237). For this particular evaluation, a case study design felt most appropriate and was therefore selected. This format can be adapted dependent on study purpose and allows researchers to gain a holistic view of a certain phenomenon, providing insight into specific issues by engaging in in-depth, descriptive questions (Creswell et al., 2007, p.239; Noor, 2008, p.1603; Baxter & Jack, 2008, p.547). However, there are issues with the approach; A main weakness that has been outlined is a lack of scientific rigour, meaning that issues such as generalisability and sampling biases are not being addressed (Noor, 2008, p.1603; Hsieh, 2004, p.96). While these weaknesses have been acknowledged and considered, the case-study model is still justifiable here due to the nature and aims of the specific evaluation.

Within the chosen research model, the 'case' selected for evaluation is a critical incident. As previously stated, these incidents are described as commonplace events occurring in routine professional practice which can indicate underlying trends, motives and structures (Tripp, 2011,

p.25). Tripp argues that every occurrence in a classroom can be a critical incident, it just has to be analysed critically to make it one (Tripp, 2011, p.28). These incidents could be typical or atypical and can identify good practices of teaching (Tripp, 2011, p.36; Joshi, 2018, p.84). These incidents are used by practitioners to discover the assumptions that frame how they work (Brookfield, 1998, p.197). Therefore, the analysis of a critical incident is rationalised for this evaluation since their purpose aligns with the aim of the study.

Subsequently, to observe this critical incident it was decided that non-participant observation was the most appropriate form of analysis. This is firstly due to the circumstances of COVID-19 which have affected classroom practice and the ability to engage. Secondly, Williams argues that the lack of personal attachment to the classroom that this model requires can yield interesting and more objective findings (Williams, 2014, p.31). However, Williams also presents the weaknesses to this approach; They argue that a physically present non-observer could influence the dynamic of the class, with some educators behaving differently when being observed (Williams, 2014, p.31). Therefore, it is important to be mindful of this when assessing the implications of the evaluation and the teaching and learning trends it identifies.

The Four Purposes

To critically analyse the chosen incident accurately, there must be a consideration of the official educational structures that are currently being implemented. In this case, a Welsh secondary classroom, the structure to be considered is Donaldson's New Curriculum for Wales which has been built around four purposes for education. These purposes are aiming to create individuals who are appropriately prepared for a rapidly changing world; They aim to develop young people as "ambitious capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives", "enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work", "ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world", and "healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of

society” (Donaldson, 2015, p.29). Within the observed lesson, a number of these specific purposes appeared to be considered and applied alongside other elements of the new curriculum.

Throughout the lesson, all pupils seemed engaged with the tasks given by the teacher; These were online numeracy activities with a focus on developing basic maths skills such as addition, multiplication, division and subtraction. From this, it is apparent that the school are implementing cross-curriculum activities with an awareness of vital elements of the new curriculum such as digital competency which will be addressed later.

During one of the designated tasks, ‘Pupil 1’ showed a lack of understanding towards subtraction when applied to two large numbers. Having become aware of this, the teacher approached ‘Pupil 1’ and asked if they needed any help. ‘Pupil 1’ then stated that they were having difficulty with the task, so the teacher explained that ‘Pupil 1’ needed to use long subtraction to complete the sum which had been covered in a previous maths lesson. ‘Pupil 1’ could not recall how to use this form of numeracy. Following this, the teacher quietly directed the pupil to the whiteboard, wrote the sum, and explained the process of long subtraction, “now we can’t take 7 away from 4, so we have to borrow it from the number next to it...”. The teacher then asked ‘Pupil 1’ to work out the answer, which he was unable to do. The teacher then reassessed their approach, and likened the numbers to something familiar for the pupil to visualise; The teacher used ‘Mars’ bars, stating “if I had 34 Mars bars, and someone took 17 of them away, I would be left with...”. Pupil 1 then achieved the correct answer and was praised by the teacher.

When viewing this incident through the lens of Donaldson’s curriculum, it is clear that some of the purposes are present in the underlying structure of the classroom. Firstly, ‘Pupil 1’’s eagerness to overcome their lack of understanding shows that they are being encouraged to be an ambitious, capable learner (Donaldson, 2015, p.29). This is reiterated later when the pupil is encouraged to approach the question again within a different context, showing a belief in their capability. Further, by being encouraged to think creatively and reframe the problem in a new way,

there is evidence that pupils are being developed as enterprising, creative contributors (Donaldson, 2015, p.29). Finally, based on the encouragement given by the teacher, and ‘Pupil 1’'s continuous engagement in attempting to overcome the specific challenge, it is clear that the pupil is being developed as a healthy, confident individual (Donaldson, 2015, p.30).

Literature Review

In extension to its application to Donaldson's curriculum and its underlying purposes, the incident is also applicable to certain areas of academic research which will now be further explored; These areas are differentiation, which is present in the teacher's use of an alternative approach to suit ‘pupil 1’'s needs, and digital competency, which is encouraged through the lesson's format.

Firstly, the process of differentiation has been explored by theorists as they assess its value in the development of learners. The process itself has been deemed necessary by a number of researchers who observe that classrooms are seeing increasingly wide ranges of diverse needs; Examples of this are gifted and talented programming, ethnicity, language and socio-economic status (Tapper & Horsley, 2017, p.42; Kiley, 2011, pp. 4-10). To meet these needs, it is stated that teachers must deliver a curriculum which is tailored to the understanding of every pupil (Bromley, 2019, p.2). According to Tomlinson, this curriculum must consider different learning styles and approaches to classroom instruction, providing specific alternatives to pupils to ensure their engagement and to avoid force-fitting them into a standard mould (Tomlinson, 2014, pp.3-4). This process must then be continued through constant assessment in a diagnostic fashion (Tomlinson, 2014, p.17).

Moreover, it has been stated by researchers that this process should be pupil-lead; Tomlinson states that a pivotal classroom goal should be students taking charge of their own learning (Tomlinson, 2014, p.18). This is extended by Morgan, who argues that learners who are provided with teacher scaffolding and allowed to use their preferred intelligence to solve problems have more opportunities to be successful (Morgan, 2014, p.35). Further, Tapper and Horsley reiterate this by

arguing that the development of this type of student-teacher relationship allows teachers to differentiate effectively, and to provide learning that responds to the complex social, cultural and cognitive needs of their students (Tapper & Horsley, 2017, p.42). By achieving this, the positive impacts of differentiated instruction can then be seen; An example of this is observed by Bromley, who argues that the process can free vital space in pupils' working memories and can impact their long-term learning (Bromley, 2019, p.3).

Nevertheless, despite the support for differentiated instruction and its benefits to pupil learning, there are also researchers who have observed that engaging in the process can present multiple difficulties. Firstly, a study by Kiley found that educators can be inconsistent in their methods of differentiated instruction since the practice can be difficult to implement (Kiley, 2011, p.1). The study observed that teachers who were provided aid such as professional development, administrative support, smaller class sizes, less classes per day and more planning time were likely to implement differentiated instruction consistently (Kiley, 2011, pp.3-4). However, teachers who received a lack of resources and time for professional development still promoted the practice, but their lack of additional training prevented structural change that would allow for the practice to be continued (Kiley, 2011, pp.62-65).

Additionally, a study by Hawkins supports Kiley's observation that the process of differentiated instruction is difficult to implement and presents their own three reasons for this (Hawkins, 2009, p.11). The first is a lack of confidence; The realisation that it is impossible to accommodate all diversity every day may deter a teacher's belief in differentiation as a successful pedagogical method (Hawkins, 2009, p.13). The next reason is a lack of teacher efficacy; The likelihood of a teacher adopting innovative practices is lessened if they do not have confidence in their ability to promote student learning (Hawkins, 2009, p.13). The final reason given is a lack of perseverance; Hawkins argues that for a transformation of traditional instructional practice to occur, on-going persistent personal growth is necessary (Hawkins, 2009, p.14).

Subsequently, a second research area that can be discussed is digital competency. Similarly to the alterations that differentiated classrooms require, it has been argued that teachers need to alter teaching practice in accordance with the exposure to technology that today's students will have experienced since birth (Morgan, 2014, p.36).

Firstly, digital competency has been observed as increasingly relevant in education as society's relationship with digital technologies changes (White, 2015, p.9). According to Hockly et al., the development of digitally networked post-industrial economies and societies has seen educators becoming aware of the digital competencies needed to successfully participate in them (Hockly et al., 2014, p.2). To ensure student development of digital competency, Brevik et al. argue that teachers must adapt their practices through the design of their learning environment (Brevik et al., 2019, p.1). This adaptation, according to some researchers, is already happening; Yang and Wu state that current learning is taking place in a "technology-suffused environment" (Yang & Wu, 2011, p.339), while Kong argues that there has been an increase in the use of digital resources and communication tools in the classroom to correlate with the growth of digital culture (Kong, 2014, p.160). Further, White provides examples of these resources, stating that learning devices such as interactive whiteboards and virtual learning environments are being added to modern classrooms (White, 2015, p.3).

Furthermore, to discover whether the addition of digital elements in the classroom has been beneficial, there have been multiple studies which have demonstrated how this has seen an increase in digital competency and other valuable skills. Firstly, Kong formed a study through the creation of a digital classroom which aimed to help learners develop their literacy competency and critical thinking skills; The study found that students were able to develop these skills successfully in a digital classroom and also saw their information processing skills improve (Kong, 2014, pp.160-168). Additionally, Yang and Wu created a study which saw digital storytelling introduced into an EFL classroom to see how this impacted learners' critical thinking and learning motivation

(Yang & Wu, 2011, p.339). The study found that digital storytelling instruction caused a significant improvement in English proficiency, critical thinking, and learning motivation (Yang & Wu, 2011, p.350).

Nevertheless, while these studies show that digital competency is valuable and necessary, it has been argued by researchers that there are potential challenges which may prevent it from being successfully implemented. Firstly, Yang and Wu suggest that a teacher lacking in digital competence may not integrate technology into regular class activities (Yang & Wu, 2011, p.342). Further Hockly et al. argue that external factors such as location and socio-economic status can negatively impact learners' digital access and skills (Hockly et al., 2014, p.10). Moreover, this acknowledgement of the impact of external factors is extended by Edwards who contextualises it in Wales; Edwards states that schools in Wales are facing issues with connectivity, ineffective professional learning and a general lack of prioritisation for the development of digital skills (Edwards, 2019). The impact of this is apparent in the slow development of learners' ICT skills in comparison to other skills such as literacy and numeracy (Edwards, 2019).

Despite these issues which are being seen in Wales, it is clear that digital competency is still valued. This can be seen in the development of a digital competency framework within the new Welsh curriculum; This framework aims to give learners the skills, knowledge and attitudes to use new technologies and systems confidently, creatively and critically (Welsh Government, 2018b, p.2). This has been deemed a "cross-curricular responsibility" which will be applied in multiple subjects across the curriculum (Welsh Government, 2018b, p.3).

Consequently, this literature review has allowed these areas of educational research to be explored critically with an acknowledgment of their weaknesses and difficulties, as well as their effectiveness and value. By understanding these areas in greater detail, their impact and relevance to the critical incident and its wider evaluation can be appreciated and contextualised.

Reflection

The discussion and evaluation of a critical incident in the classroom has allowed for the exploration of relevant educational literature and theory. By engaging with research, a better understanding can be gained of the underlying structures and teaching styles that can create successful learning environments.

Alongside these structures, it is important to acknowledge other variables that can contribute to successful learning; One of the most important processes to ensure this is continuous professional development. This can be achieved through critical reflection, the “sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of our teaching assumptions”(Brookfield, 2017, p.3). The value of this process is supported by a number of theorists; Firstly, Brookfield argues that teachers should aim to uncover their own personal assumptions through critical reflection since it is “part and parcel of what it means to do good professional work” (Brookfield, 2017, p.80). Further, Shandomo shares this belief, stating that this process of self-examination and self-evaluation is necessary to improve professional practices (Shandomo, 2010, p.103). This is extended by Howard who argues that critical reflection is crucial for the delivery of culturally relevant pedagogy (Howard, 2003, p.197). While Howard acknowledges that this can be “an arduous task because it forces the individual to ask challenging questions”(Howard, 2003, p.198), it is clearly vital to prevent a stagnated teaching style.

Within the context of the chosen critical incident, it is apparent that this process of reflection has been engaged with by the teacher. Similarly to the method that Brookfield describes, the teacher involved checked the accuracy and validity of their assumption (Brookfield, 2017, p.3); Their assumption that the use of digital learning would suit all pupils in the class was invalid. From this, the teacher then reassessed their approach and tried an alternative form of teaching instruction which was more appropriate for the individual pupil. The differentiated form of instruction then saw success.

Despite the success of this alternative teaching method, further critical reflection may have led to a deeper consideration of how the use of differentiated instruction could have been even more effective. As previously stated, a pivotal classroom goal of differentiation is to help students take charge of their own learning (Tomlinson, 2014, p.18). The chosen alternative method did see the pupil gain new understanding, however the facilitation of the method was more teacher-led as this allowed for quicker comprehension. While this was effective at the time, there is a risk that the pupil's understanding will not extend past that specific moment since an assessment of their learning was not observed. As a result, the pupil may rely too heavily on the teacher to solve these problems later since it is unclear as to whether their understanding would allow them to approach it independently. It is important to note that further lesson observations could have revealed that the pupil had in fact gained full comprehension from that one interaction. However, based on this evaluation alone this was not seen.

In future, a more valuable approach may be for the teacher to provide less explicit guidance and to allow the pupil to try different approaches independently with support available if needed. This would then provide scaffolding to the pupil as they attempted to solve the problem based on their own preferred learning style. This, as previously stated, has been identified as a valuable and effective form of differentiated instruction by Morgan (Morgan, 2014, p.35).

Subsequently, by observing critical reflection and its value in professional learning, it will be considered a priority going forward in personal professional development. While there are many approaches to critical reflection, Brookfield's methods seem effective and best suited for personal teaching practice. This framework will be adopted in the future, addressing the accuracy of personal assumptions by engaging in assessment for learning regularly with pupils. By doing this, the achievement of culturally relevant pedagogy that is considered vital by Howard can be achieved (Howard, 2003, p.197).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this evaluation has exhibited the value of a critical approach when considering occurrences in the classroom which could be perceived as mundane or unimportant. The process of engaging with the chosen incident, and analysing it through the lens of theoretical literature and educational research has allowed for a deeper understanding of good teaching practice.

Moreover, the methodological framework within which the evaluation has taken place has proved useful despite its potential weaknesses and difficulties; The use of a non-participant, qualitative case study has successfully provided insight into the issue at hand (Creswell et al., 2007, p.239). Despite its success, in future there should be a consideration of other observational models and their literature to ensure that the most effective method is being used and can therefore provide the most thorough evaluation.

Furthermore, this evaluation and its subsequent reflection have achieved the aim of identifying next teaching steps; A major priority in teaching that has been revealed is critical reflection. The value of this, which is emphasised in the theoretical literature analysed, is clearly shared by the educational structures being implemented in Wales. There are currently five professional teaching standards which underpin professional teaching practice in Wales; These standards are pedagogy, leadership, professional learning, innovation and collaboration (Welsh Government, 2018a, p.2). In consideration of critical reflection, this practice is encouraged within the standard for professional learning as it encourages teachers to reflect and engage in challenge to deepen effective pedagogy and continue professional development (Welsh Government, 2018a, p.2). Outside of these standards, the Welsh government reiterated their support for critical reflection in a paper dedicated to the topic; It is stated that teaching is a learning profession, so critical reflection is a necessity for practitioners to learn and develop throughout their careers and do the best for their pupils (Welsh Government, 2015, pp.2-14).

In consideration of these elements of the evaluation and the evaluation as a whole, it is clear that approaching situations critically and taking time to evaluate personal teaching practices is an extremely valuable process which can lead to the creation of effective learning environments. Therefore, this provides guidance for future teaching steps.

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Appendices

Observation 1

Date and time, year group: Year 7
30/09/2020 10:00am

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).

- French Lesson
- At the beginning of study (First term of the school year)
- Indoor class
- Mixed ability pupils
- Lesson focus: Learning the French alphabet, how to pronounce the sounds and how to spell.

Classroom culture

(What is the classroom 'vibe.'? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviours towards learning seem like at this point in time?)

- Learning seems to be very interactive
- Teacher will pronounce the French letter and then immediately have the class repeat it, and then use it in conversation with each other e.g. spelling their own names, playing hangman and guessing the letters in their French pronunciation.
- Pupils engaged in these activities in small groups.
- Clear inter-pupil support - One pupil appeared to be struggling so the other pupil sat with them encouraged them and asked if there was anything they did not understand.
- Behaviour towards learning very positive - All pupils seem engaged and eager to take part in activities.

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 teacher used her interactive whiteboard to display a powerpoint presentation. This displayed task instructions which the teacher also communicated verbally.
- The interactive whiteboard also displayed the aims of the lesson as a whole at the bottom of the screen so the pupils were aware of what they were trying to achieve.
- The activities during the lesson related to these aims as they encouraged the children to be able to understand the alphabet phonetically in both their written and spoken forms.
- The children have the French alphabet and each letters' pronunciation displayed on the board during tasks so they had a reference point.

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)?

- Teacher listens to the smaller groups that the children are in, observing any wrong pronunciations or difficulties and aiding them in reaching the correct pronunciations without simply giving them the answer - using questions like “are you sure that’s the right one?” And “Does that sound right? Or is that the sound for something else?”
- The group work in which the pupils played hangman allowed a deeper understanding of the alphabet as it removed the formality of the classroom and allowed them to have fun with their learning. Playing a game with their friends removed the pressure and allowed them to make mistakes amongst their peers and be corrected more informally. Also, the competitive nature of the game kept the pupils engaged as they wanted to beat their friends.

Access and challenge

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

- Working in small groups and playing games engaged the learners by removing the traditional formality in the classroom and allowing them to make mistakes with less pressure, the worst consequence of their mistake is laughing with their friend rather than being penalised. Also the competitiveness keeps them engaged as it recreates the atmosphere of playing games with their friends outside of the classroom.
- Challenge: The children were encouraged to guess which sound belongs to which letter based on knowledge they had acquired in a previous lesson, testing their knowledge and engagement.
- Challenge: Pupils were rarely given the outright answer by the teacher, they were led to the answer by the teacher giving hints and ensuring them that it is okay to be wrong in order to eventually lead to the right answer.

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)?

- Pupils were encouraged to use what they had learned in a previous lesson to engage with the day’s tasks and activities.
- Knowledge was developed by having them spell specific words to check that they understood the letter’s pronunciation e.g. their own name in the French phonetic spelling.
- The pupils were tested at the end of the lesson by having to sing the French alphabet together.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

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

- Encourages the pupils' confidence in their abilities by having them play games.
- Links to key skills e.g. critical thinking.
- Encouraged pupils to be ambitious, capable learners by aiding them in areas where they struggle by emphasising how able they are to understand and giving hints as opposed to just providing the answer straight away.

Critical Incident Identification Record 1

Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	• 30/09/2020 • 10:00 • Year 7: Key stage 3 • Involved: Pupil and Teacher • French classroom: Pupils learning the French alphabet, and how to understand it in its spoken and written form.
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*What happened?
A detailed
decription of what
you observed and
what thoughts on
pedagogy and
practice occurred
to you as a result,
looking towards
your research.*

- During a listening task, the French letter “é” was used which many of the pupils had not heard before.
- Pupil 1 then asked why certain letters have accents on them, what this does and why this happens.
- The teacher then walked over to Pupil 1 and directed them to look at the classroom display, which showed the letter “é”.
- The teacher then explained that it changed the pronunciation of the letter “e”, and spoke the letter both with and without the accent to display how the letter had changed.
- The teacher then encouraged Pupil 1 to try this themselves, praising them when they did it correctly.
- Following this, she then engaged with the full class, reiterating the same explanation that she had just used with Pupil 1, without pointing out that an individual did not understand.
- By doing this, the teacher did not embarrass or isolate Pupil 1 for their lack of understanding, and also improved the understanding of the wider class in case there were other individuals who had the same concern who did not feel confident enough to ask the question themselves.
- A number of individual pupils then stated that they now understood and also had felt the same as Pupil 1.

Pedagogical Principles

- Encouraged collaboration - Between the pupil and teacher
- Build on previous knowledge and experience to engage interest - described the new letter as an extension of something that the pupil already knew, so it was less something they did not know and more an additional piece of knowledge that would improve their understanding.
- Encourage learner to take responsibility for their own learning - When pupil asked why certain letters have accents, the teacher used responses such as “good question” and “thank you for asking”, using positive reinforcement to encourage the pupil to continue to further their understanding through asking questions. This approach to attaining new knowledge could be repeated by the pupil again due to the positive reaction.

Four Purposes

- Ambitious, Capable Learners - Pupil 1 showed a lack of understanding but by asking the question, also showed an ambition to venture outside of their own understanding to learn something new. This being shown positive reinforcement encourages this.
- Healthy, Confident Individuals - Pupil 1 being quietly shown something that they did not understand without drawing attention to them prevented any embarrassment. The explanation then being put to the rest of the class without his lack of understanding being pointed out allowed the pupil to feel confident as they would now be comfortable to raise a concern again. Also, having the teacher explain to the rest of the class and then show that other pupils did not understand allowed the pupil to feel supported and confident as it was a common question.

Observation 2

Date and time, year group: Year 7 30/09/2020 11:00
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). • ICT Lesson • Indoors • Mixed Ability and ALN students • Start of Unit study • Describes as “catch up lesson” with pupils finishing tasks from previous lesson
Classroom culture (What is the classroom ‘vibe.’? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviours towards learning seem like at this point in time?) • Very interactive with the teacher • Teacher continuously walking around the classroom and giving individual support. • Cross-curriculum consideration - encouraged literacy through correct grammar and spelling. • Pupils all on task and engaged - ICT skills built through games and other tasks e.g. typing speed game.
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 children all have a computer each to carry out tasks. • Tasks are displayed on interactive whiteboard, with the teacher verbally explaining expectations such as the time in which they have to complete each task. • Children working individually but allowed to interact with pupils sitting next to them.

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)?

- Teacher checks in with pupils individually to check their understanding and if they are on task.
- Playing games on the computer which improve ICT skills - these games test skills such as typing speed, giving a score depending on how well they have done. This scoring aids both their understanding of how well they are doing, and their engagement as they can compete with their fellow pupils' scores.

Access and challenge

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

- Using games recreates their experiences of playing games at home, encouraging engagement by removing the formality of the classroom.
- Challenge.- The pupils were given different forms of technology and tested on whether this was an example of “input” or “output” based on their prior knowledge gained in previous ICT lessons.

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)?

- Pupils were tested on prior knowledge a through a number of tasks.
- One example was online games which required them to apply their skills to score highly.
- Another example is the “input” “output” quiz which required them to recall their knowledge from a previous session.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

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

- Cross Curriculum consideration - encouraging literacy within the ICT lesson
- Links to key skills e.g. critical thinking
- Encouraged pupils to be engaged through having fun and competitive activities.
- Inclusion of ALN pupils - two teaching assistants one of which was using sign language to communicate with a deaf pupil - considering how the lesson will need to be adapted for those with ALN.

Critical Incident Identification Record 2

Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	• 30/09/2020 • 11:00 • Year 7: Key stage 3 • Mixed ability and ALN • Involved: Pupil and Teacher • ICT Lesson: Pupils learning different aspects of ICT through games and quizzes e.g. which technology is “input” and which is “output”
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*What happened?
A detailed
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your research.*

- During a quiz in which pupils had to state whether a certain piece of technology was considered “input” or “output”, Pupil 1 did not seem to be engaging with the task.
- The teacher then approached the pupil and asked what was wrong and if they needed help.
- Pupil 1 then did not answer, so the teacher continued by asking him whether the item on the screen, a speaker, was “input” or “output”
- Pupil 1 then responded “I don’t know” to which the teacher responded “yes you do, remember last lesson we talked about this and which one it is”
- Pupil 1 then stated “I don’t know” again, so the teacher instead gave other examples, leading back to the item at hand “so if this item is ‘input’, a speaker would be..”
- Following this, Pupil 1 gave the correct answer, receiving praise from the teacher before moving on to the next question confidently.

Pedagogical Principles

- Encouraged Collaboration - between teacher and pupil
- Promoted problem solving and critical thinking - pupil had to work through their lack of understanding and had to think critically to achieve this, using a type of process of elimination based on previous knowledge
- Encouraged learner to take responsibility for their own learning - Pupil 1 was supported by the teacher but had to reach the answer on their own, making them responsible for their success in the quiz.
- Build on previous knowledge and experience - Pupil 1 had to use their prior knowledge to aid their understanding within their current work.

Four Purposes

- Ambitious, Capable Learners - Pupil 1 showed a lack of understanding, and initially a lack of ambition to further their understanding. By the teacher refusing to accept “I don’t know”, pupil 1 was reminded of their capability, and had their ambition encouraged. By receiving positive reinforcement when being ambitious, the pupil is likely to repeat this furthering of knowledge again.
- Healthy, confident individuals - Pupil 1 showed a lack of confidence when stating “I don’t know”. When the teacher refused to accept this, she reinforced her belief in the pupil’s capabilities. This build the pupil’s confidence so that they felt comfortable trying to give an answer rather than being afraid of getting the answer wrong. By being encouraged to believe in their own capabilities, the pupil’s confidence is now improved allowing them to be more engaged.

Observation 3

Date and time, year group: Year 7
30/09/2020 12:20

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 Lesson in ICT suite
- Beginning of study (First term of school year)
- Indoor Class
- Mixed ability
- Lesson focus: Improving numeracy skills in basic areas such as addition, multiplication, division and subtraction on computers using maths based games.

Classroom culture

(What is the classroom 'vibe.'? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviours towards learning seem like at this point in time?)

- Positive attitudes to learning and engagement
- Pupils playing games allowed them to learn in a fun way.
- Final quiz using Kahoot used healthy competition to build understanding
- Teacher continuously walking around the classroom to monitor pupil engagement and understanding.
- Inter-pupil conversation and support.

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?)

- Pupils given a number of tasks via Microsoft teams to complete, each pupil's computer showing their progress and how many tasks they had left to complete.
- Each task was a different game or puzzle with different instructions to follow being provided on screen.
- The activities considered cross-curriculum learning - engaging numeracy with digital competency.

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)?

- Directions given on what the pupils' are engaging in at the start of the lesson verbally by the teacher.
- The teacher then observed the pupils, checking in with individuals who looked as though they were struggling and helping them understand how to achieve well.
- When it came to the Kahoot quiz, pupils were given instructions verbally and then had them later provided on screen.

Access and challenge

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

- Working individually but being allowed to converse allowed pupils to stay engaged by asking their friends for help in a more relaxed setting, removing fear of being penalised for not understanding. Also, being able to see how their friends are progressing encourages them to improve and compete to gain similar scores. Due to them being games as opposed to a more traditional method of assessment, there is less formality so the competition is healthy and productive.
- Challenge - Pupils were challenged based on prior knowledge gained in maths lessons with another teacher, encouraging them to apply this knowledge in a new context.
- Challenge- During the Kahoot quiz, the teacher asked those guessing answers correctly to explain why they chose that answer. This removed the risk of them having lucky guesses, and encouraged them to articulate their own understanding. During this time, the teacher also put in new mathematical concepts which challenged their understanding.

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)?

- Numeracy tasks and games required pupils to apply knowledge gained from maths lessons, their score reflecting how advanced their current knowledge is.
- Kahoot quiz allowed pupils to apply their knowledge in a more competitive and time restrained way, adding a fun element of pressure to assess how quickly they can apply this knowledge.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

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

- Encouragement of pupils' confidence in their abilities by having them compete in an online quiz with each other
- This was also done with an allowance of nicknames so that they did not have to display their name to the class if they did not want to, protecting their confidence.
- Teacher being on hand to explain certain concept on the whiteboard if needed rather than all of the numeracy being ICT focussed.

Critical Incident Identification Record 3

Details relevant to the research context.	• 30/09/2020 • 12:20 • Year 7: Key Stage 3 • Mixed ability • Involved: Pupil and Teacher • Numeracy lesson in ICT classroom: Pupils were to apply knowledge gained in maths lessons to numeracy tasks and games online, before engaging in a class wide online quiz to test their knowledge.
Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	

*What happened?
A detailed
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your research.*

- During one of the designated numeracy tasks, Pupil 1 was struggling to understand how to use subtraction on two larger numbers.
- The teacher then explained that pupil 1 needed to use long subtraction which they had learned in their maths lesson with another teacher.
- The pupil still could not recall how to apply this.
- The teacher then quietly brought the pupil over to the whiteboard and wrote down the sum, he then explained the process of long subtraction e.g. “now we can’t take 7 away from 4, so we have to borrow it from the number next to it...”. He then asked pupil 1 to try and work out the answer.
- The pupil was still unsure, so the teacher likened the numbers to something familiar for the pupil to visualise, in this case, a Mars bar.
- The teacher stated “If I had 34 Mars bars, and someone took 17 of them away, I would be left with...”
- Pupil 1 then achieved the correct answer and was praised by the teacher.

Pedagogical Principles

- Encouraged Collaboration - Between pupil and teacher
- Build on previous knowledge and experiences - Encouraging the pupil to recall information learned in a previous maths lesson to apply to this specific problem, before adding context with a familiar item, in this case a Mars Bar.
- Encourage learner to take responsibility for their own learning - used open ended questions to encourage the pupil to achieve the answer on their own, rather than just providing the correct answer.
- Create authentic contexts for learning - applied the maths problem to a real-life item as opposed to a hypothetical question.
- Make connections within and across areas of learning and experience - combining numeracy and digital competency within one lesson.

Four purposes

- Ambitious, capable learners - Pupil 1 showed a lack of understanding but an ambition to overcome this by engaging in the teacher’s alternative explanation. By the teacher allowing them to gain the answer on their own, this reinforced the pupil’s own capability and encouraged that to grow.
- Healthy, confident individuals - Pupil 1 initially showed a lack of confidence as they did not understand how to approach the question. By the teacher encouraging the pupil to work out the answer themselves and praising them when they did so successfully, this will allow the pupil’s confidence to grow. Also by stating that the pupil was capable of achieving this on their own, this improved confidence further.
- Enterprising, creative contributors - having pupil 1 consider long subtraction in a more creative and unusual way e.g. using Mars bars, this can encourage more creative approaches to other tasks in future.

Observation 4

Date and time, year group: Year 7
30/09/2020 14:00

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).

- Welsh Lesson
- Beginning of term
- Indoor Class
- Mixed ability class
- Lesson Focus: Learning Welsh hobbies and how to put this into a conversation.

Classroom culture

(What is the classroom 'vibe.'? What do attitudes, dispositions, behaviours towards learning seem like at this point in time?)

- Learners are very engaged
- Classroom atmosphere is quite conversational with pupils having understanding tested through games and other activities.
- Pupils working individually, then working as a whole in a game of noughts and crosses to test their conversational skills.
- Teacher very much encouraged a pupil-led atmosphere.

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 session began and ended with a game of noughts and crosses which allowed the pupils to use what they have learned in a previous lesson in sentences which describe hobbies in Welsh.
- The rest of the lesson and its objectives was explained verbally by the teacher, with questions being encouraged in the instance that a pupil does not understand.
- An activity was then provided where pupils had to highlight and identify positive and negative sentences in relation to hobbies, alongside connecting words.

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)?

- Teacher encouraged questions from pupils so learners can understand what they are engaging in, while listening out to see if pronunciations are correct, offering her own pronunciation when needed.
- If pupil offered an incorrect answer or pronunciation, the teacher would use questions such as “are you sure?” To encourage the pupil to reconsider.
- The learning environment being changed by having the pupils play noughts and crosses in two teams aided their understanding of how to achieve well as there was a visual aid to show who was winning, showing that if you have good vocabulary and grammatical knowledge you can create a positive outcome for your team.

Access and challenge

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

- The class working as two separate teams in competition with each other during the game of noughts and crosses removed the classroom formality but encouraged healthy competition amongst the students.
- Challenge - Pupils had to use their prior knowledge to put the hobbies on the board into sentences, using correct pronunciation and sentence structure.
- Challenge - Pupils were asked to read a passage aloud, again using correct pronunciation which tested their pronunciation knowledge.
- Challenge - Pupils had to identify positive and negative sentence structures in a written passage.

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)?

- Pupils were asked to apply previous knowledge to the games of noughts and crosses that they played.
- They also had to apply previous knowledge to their analysis of a passage to look for positive and negative sentence structures, with their knowledge being developed in a second paragraph that was more complicated and had new sentence structures and vocabulary included.
- The pupils’ second game of noughts and crosses required them to use sentences and vocabulary without their work books there for support, developing their knowledge by testing if it can be applied from memory.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

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

- Playing the same game with different requirements built pupil confidence by showing them that they are able to apply their knowledge from memory.
- Link to key skills e.g. critical thinking
- Encouraged pupils by allowing those struggling to reach answers by themselves through support and hints as opposed to just providing the correct answer straight away.

Critical Incident Identification Record 4

Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	• 30/09/2020 • 14:00 • Year 7: Key Stage 3 • Involved: Pupil and Teacher • Welsh Classroom: Pupils learning Welsh vocabulary and grammar concerning hobbies and likes and dislikes in their spoken and written form.
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*What happened?
A detailed
decription of what
you observed and
what thoughts on
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- During a game of noughts and crosses in which the ‘boxes’ were hobbies, pupils had to chose one to put into a sentence, concerning whether they like the hobby or activity and why. If they did this correctly, they could then put a nought or cross in that box depending on their team, improving their chance of winning.
- Pupil 1 was selected as he had yet to provide an answer. However, when the pupil gave their answer, they missed the verb “to play” and just stated that they liked the activity.
- The teacher then pointed out that while the sentence was good, the pupil had missed the verb, so asked him to repeat the sentence.
- The student then stated that he did not know what the verb was.
- The teacher, rather than accepting this or giving him the answer, replied “you do know”, and began to sound out the beginning of the word for them.
- The pupil then said the sentence again, this time with the correct verb in the grammatically correct place.

Pedagogical Principles

- Encouraged Collaboration - Between the pupil and teacher
- Build on previous knowledge and experience to gain interest - teacher had the students use their prior knowledge within the competitive context of a game to engage their interest and test their knowledge and their ability to apply it.
- Encourage learner to take responsibility for their own learning - did not give the pupil the correct answer but encouraged them to reach the answer on their own, placing the responsibility to do well on them but aiding them enough so they do not feel like they are struggling beyond their ability.
- Promote problem solving and critical thinking - pupil had to think critically to improve their understanding.

Four Purposes

- Ambitious, capable learners - Pupil 1 had a lack of confidence in their ability to put the correct verb into the correct place in the sentence. The teacher encouraging the pupil and stating that they believe the pupil is capable encouraged them to try again. This improved the pupil’s own belief in their capabilities and helped grow their ambition to try again.
- Healthy, confident individuals - Pupil 1 was clearly not confident in their abilities or knowledge. The teacher stating that she knew the pupil knew the answer made the pupil more confident in their ability to try again. Also, by praising the pupil’s first attempt before stating that something was missing, the teacher managed to not damage the pupil’s confidence as they knew they had already achieved a majority of the task requirement already. This gave them the confidence to overcome that final hurdle.

