

**Literacy – A Key to**  
**Learning**  
**ECIE5008**  
**Portfolio**

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## **Part One**

Several theorists have contributed to the development of Literacy. Piaget, Vygotsky and Skinner theories have significant impact on the development of literacy. Theories have been built on and evolved over time to impact significantly on cognitive development and learning experiences of the learner. Cognitive development refers to the children's development in the way they process information and acquire their intelligence, perception, and language abilities, which foster the children's well-being throughout the lifespan and cultivate their cognitive abilities (Saraho & Evans, 2021). The constructivist approach is that children learn with 'free will' they explore and discover things for themselves in their environment. Piaget believed in developmental stages for learning and that schemas were created and updated in the child's brain which gave them the framework to continue to the environment and others. Piaget viewed the growing child as a 'lone scientist' that is one who works, experiments and makes discoveries on their own (Pritchard, 2013).

Compared to the social constructivist approach of Vygotsky which relies on the learner developing by social interaction with others such as teachers, parents and peers. Vygotsky believed that children should learn through social interaction. Social interaction plays an important part in the development of cognition and understanding. Some of the concepts such as social interaction involves cooperative and collaborative dialogue, peer-based learning and encouraging learners to make mistakes and learn from them. This illustrates creating resilience within the learners, encouraging errors and getting things wrong as this example in itself builds resilience and the ability to manage the situation without interference. Vygotsky developed the zone of proximal development relating to children's cognitive development which they can do independently. Scaffolding and modelling provide the frameworks for children to learn new things and then it becomes part of their schemas that then build up over time due to their experiences and learning.

To encourage learners to transfer Literacy skills and apply them in everyday and unknown contexts across a range of their learning (Knelston Primary School, 2023). This demonstrates that Vygotsky's theory for learners to be able to be independent in their learning and apply their skills across the curriculum. It could be argued that this approach is very much emended as part of the new curriculum in Wales. Vygotsky's theory included peer-based learning, encouraging learners to make mistakes, build resilience and growth mindset which can be used in the Zones of Proximal Development. We also claim that scaffolding within ZPD may trigger the developmental process and lead to qualitative change much later, when a skill or a concept acquired through teaching/learning would undergo a further developmental change (Shvarts & Bakker, 2019).

Both Piaget and Vygotsky have legacies that feed into our current curriculum pedagogy. Learning is an active process based on constructed learning (Piaget, 1932) and supported by social interactions and leadership (Vygotsky, 1978). The new Welsh curriculum that has been implemented has focused on the learner's independence and a breadth of skills. Children and young people should have their learning developed across the curriculum through three Cross-curriculum responsibilities that should be the responsibility of all teachers: literacy; numeracy; and digital competence (Donaldson, 2015).

B.F Skinner's work on behaviourism has shaped teaching practices for many years and continues to have an influence and use in today's classroom. Skinner believed that you could condition learners to behave in a certain way. Skinner developed operant conditioning whereby rewards positive or negative were associated or given to the learner depending on which behaviour they displayed. In other words, their desired behaviour is acknowledged and celebrated, and they are motivated or conditioned (Cullen, 2011). In contrast, Piaget and Vygotsky believed that the learner has 'free-will' and independence. They would be influenced by their peers and required experiences in order to develop their learning whereas Skinner seems to identify that behaviour can be taught. All theorists have relevance in the classroom and how classroom styles and teaching have evolved over time.

Policies have changed in the last thirty years enabling the Welsh Curriculum to evolve and currently be embedded across all schools. Whilst successful implementation relies heavily on the school and its leadership team it also important to note that assessment is still a topic for discussion and how we measure progress is still to be decided. All schools have a Language, Literacy and Communications policy which outlines the objectives and expectations of what the learner will be provided with and what the expectations are. It clear from the school setting that theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky continue to shape how we teach and our learners. To encourage learners to transfer Literacy skills and apply them in everyday and unknown contexts across a range of their learning (Knelston Primary, 2023). This illustrates how the theory and pedagogical approach have become embedded within the new curriculum. The new approach is about utilising your core skills of literacy, numeracy and digital competence across the rest of the curriculum areas.

Schmidt asserted that 'no one definition of good teaching can be taught directly to teachers. Therefore, he concluded 'that reflection by the individual teacher is the best way to advance their practice (Yi-Lien Yeh, 2018). It is important to reflect on lessons and to think about how to improve or adjust for the next lesson. As a teacher you may need to consider were the resources appropriate? Was the task set outlined clearly? Was there a clear and modelled introduction leading to the task? Was there appropriate differentiation provided for the ability groups within the class? As a practitioner it is

key to constantly reflect and review your practice. This cycle ensures that as a practitioner you are reviewing and adjusting your teaching according to the needs of your learner.

Despite the changes in education, it is fair to argue that there is still a disparity for the pupils in deprived areas who are not able to access the curriculum and experience the learning that they need and should have the opportunity to have. Unfortunately, statistics suggest that learners from deprived areas are more inclined to poorer literacy skills than those not from a deprived background.

Nearly 4 million children in the UK grow up in poverty. Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to do worse on a number of outcomes, including literacy, wider education and health. Children from poorer backgrounds also face much less advantageous 'early childhood caring environments' than children from better-off families (National Literacy Trust, 2011). It is important that we work to close this gap and ensure all children regardless of their socio-economic background have the opportunity to thrive and access education.

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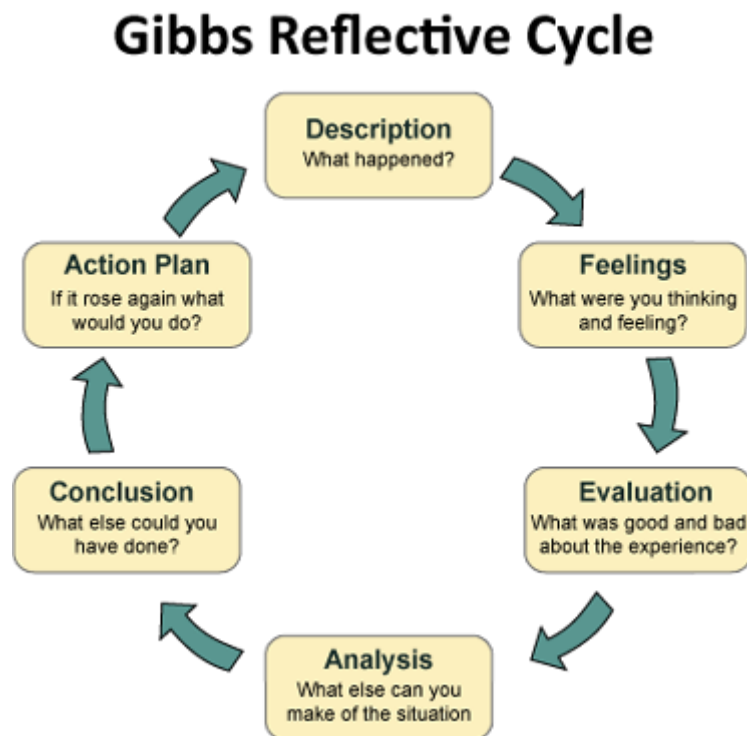
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## **Part Two**

### **Reflective Commentary on your reading session on the video**

This is a reflection on the task to prepare a video demonstrating how you would present a story to a group of young people or children of a specific age group and include an introduction to a follow-up activity.

### **Reflective Model**



**Gibbs Reflective cycle (Crowe Associates – [crowe-associates.co.uk](http://crowe-associates.co.uk))**

### **Reflective Model**

For this task I will use Gibb's Reflective model to critique the learning on how I presented the story to my class. Gibb's model of reflection consists of six stages, covering description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan (Adeani et al, 2020).

### **What is reflection?**

Reflection often begins when you pause to ‘think-back’ after something unexpected or out of the ordinary has happened (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011). Gaunt (2008) believes that reflection on practice is a sign of a teachers active engagement in their students learning ( Yi-Lien Yeh, 2018).

### **Description – What happened?**

We tasked with preparing a five-minute video demonstrating how we would read a story to a group of children or young people. We had to include an introduction to a follow-up activity.

### **Evaluation - What went well?**

I felt that the story went really well, and the class engaged and enjoyed the learning and the discussion we had about the story’s meaning.

I think that I was clear in my objectives for the session and had planned sufficiently to that I knew the story and the key messages that I wanted the children to get out of the story.

The children were really engaged and there was lots of discussion around ‘What is Empathy’ which was great and provided me with a lot to focus on and talk about.

I had scanned the story book which meant that I could transfer the while book onto a PowerPoint presentation which made it easier for my class to see and was an excellent visual to get them thinking about what was happening in key points of the story. It also allowed me to talk about and get them to notice the colours in the story and what was the reason for this? Why did the author use colour in this way and what did it mean to the reader? This also provided some excellent discussions with the class. I was able to read the story twice as to the class and outline the short activity to them. I felt that most of the class had a good understanding of what was required of them to complete the class and I had differentiated the learning, so all the class had an activity to complete.

I had completed and researched the book and met with the Class teacher to go through my lesson plan and ask advice on the learning objectives and I felt that this was really beneficial as they were able to give me some feedback such as scan the book and get it on the screen to read for the class and break down the introductory activities. I felt that this was really helpful before recoding the video and enabled me to make the lesson more interactive and flow better.

I think that I was able to manage the discussion with the class well and my instructions for responses such as put your hand s up if you had a question were used, I could have used lollipop sticks as well to choose a pupil to answer and I think I would have used this had I not had many responses to the questions. I also used tables – so set a discussion for example, ‘What is Empathy’ and each table has

to feedback what their table thought it meant within five minutes. This worked very well, and I wrote all the meanings from the different tables up on a flipchart so we could discuss them as a whole class.

### **Evaluation - What was challenging?**

**Time Management** – I was able to edit my video down to just over six-minutes, but I had run over time on my original video by 10 minutes, so I think next time I need to set a timer to ensure that I stay within the required time limit. I think that I also need to condense down the task as an introduction not a full task and get them to

**Lesson Planning/Overplanning** – I felt that I have planned for the session, and this affected my ability to keep to the five-minute time limit. I think I was trying to get too many things done in a short time rather than focus on what the requirements of the assignment were. Next time. I think I will plan out an outline but be aware to focus on the task rather than plan a full lesson.

**Technology** – I used iMovie to record my videos but found I could not upload these, so I ended up using my phone to record the video which worked better. I think that I need to get better at familiarising myself with technology in advance and ask for help rather than try to fix it myself. My video had problems with the sound, so I had to re-record it. In the future I will just use my iPhone to record the videos and not the school IPADs as this seemed to create more problems with video, for example, missing sound and slow-motion speed. I also had to re-record my video as there was an issue with the sound and speed of the video halfway through. For me, this means I need to make sure the technology works and that I thoroughly check the video is audible on another device other than my own.

**Knowledge** – The book I chose to read to Year 5 and 6 was ‘How to heal a broken wing’ which had some amazing pictures with themes of community and helping others. I felt that this book allowed for more discussion and also the use of pictures meant that the children could try to describe the characters thoughts and feelings at certain points of the story as well as being aware of the way colour is used in the book to represent emotions. Whilst I think this was a challenging topic to discuss I think that I was prepared enough and had broken down the tasks and activities to ensure that it led up to a full activity. I also thought of modelling an answer to show the children what it could look like.

### **Conclusion – What have I learnt for next time?**

I have learnt that I need to really think about the outcome of the lesson. This will help me to redefine the lesson objective and make it clearer for the learners to understand. So I think next time I really need to spend more time thinking about what it is I want the learners to do and get out of the session. This will absolutely help shape the lesson and ensure that I review and reflect to adapt my lesson plans and delivery in the future. Yet reflecting on our teaching and the ways in which our students learn from what we do in our taught sessions, is a contingent practice and depends on the conditions and context at the time (Rushton & Suter, 2012)

### **Action Plan - What could I do differently next time?**

I think that if I had to repeat the lesson, I would put the lesson objectives up first after reading the story and then complete the scaffolding activities which lead up to the activity with lesson objectives. There were 2 or 3 'warm-up' activities to get the children ready for the actual task which would hopefully help them understand and focus on what they needed to do.

I also think if I set out the lesson objectives first this would be clearer for the class to understand.

### **Lesson Objectives**

1 star – LO – Use the 2 different scenes from the story to describe how the bird is feeling.  
(Learners will have two print outs of scenes from the book)

2/3 star – LO – Write a short paragraph as one of the characters in the story. Describe how they are feeling. Use emotion/feelings vocabulary.

### **Introduction Activities**

Pairs/Groups – What is Empathy? Discuss and feedback to the rest of the class. (5 minutes)

Pairs – Discuss what are the themes in the story? Discuss and feedback to the rest of the class. (5 minutes).

However well you approach the management of your time you are never going to be able to regard as perfect (Forsyth, 2013). I think that this illustrates the need for constant reflection and review to make changes and adapt in order to complete what you need to get done. I don't think that there is a 'one-size' fits all approach when it comes to managing your time effectively.

Good critical thinking skills, if applied well can help us to make much more realistic and accurate appraisals of our own abilities, interests and thinking processes. This is useful in helping us to make decisions about where to focus our energies when looking for work, pursuing further training, or making life choices. (Cottrell, 2023).

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