

**ECAD 6007: *Who am I teaching?*
Assignment**

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.

Deadline: 27/10/2020 11.59pm

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INTRODUCTION

In this critical evaluation a 'critical incident', as defined in Tripp (1993), observed during a bridging experience at a local school will be analysed. This critical incident will be used to explore the pedagogic theories and circumstances which lead to its occurrence, as well as how it may influence teacher practice moving forward under the new curriculum in Wales, as proposed by Professor Graham Donaldson.

The use of critical incidents in the context of reflective practice was discussed by Tripp in his book "Critical incidents in Teaching: Developing Professional Judgement" which sought to emphasise the importance of continuous professional development through self-reflection of teachers' professional judgement in circumstances where there may be no correct response or action.

The basic premise is to identify an incident which may appear trivial or mundane, yet through analysis can become critical via exploration of its creation and future implications. For example, a child may raise their hand to ask permission to sharpen their pencil over at the classroom bin. This may appear inconsequential at first, but upon critical evaluation it may be indicative of the status quo within the classroom. One train of thought may lead to the conclusion that the teacher has established a suitable hierarchy and thus should be observed for the purposes of investigating behaviour management. Another train of thought, more humanistic in nature, may conclude that the level of autonomy experienced by learners is lacking and may result in less-confident, enterprising, and ambitious learners; working against the four purposes that define Wales' new curriculum (Dauncey, 2015).

Throughout this evaluation, the school context will be described, as will the observation methodology. The critical incident will be linked to the four purposes before being analysed to explain why it happened. Finally, next steps following the incident will be identified and the study as a whole will be assessed in relation to its suitability for the task at hand and its effectiveness in aiding a reflective practitioner in Wales.

OBSERVATION

School & Class context

The school that was visited was an English-speaking, mixed gender secondary school in south Wales catering to ages 11-16. The school hosts around 800 students, a third of whom are entitled to free school meals (FSM), and is located in an area of high deprivation. Sixty percent of the previous year 7 cohort arrived at the school with standardised reading scores less than one hundred. The school maintains an average attendance of around 94%. These details were quoted approximately from the Welsh Government and school leaders to maintain anonymity by BERA guidelines.

All observations were made on the same day and were subject to COVID-19 restrictions. Although the school was making efforts to run as smoothly as possible, naturally the styles of teaching and cultures within the school had changed

somewhat from usual operation. Potential repercussions of COVID-19 will be discussed later in this text.

Four different lessons were observed. Three were year 8, set 2 (of 5), and one was year 7 set 5 with additional learning needs (ALN). The critical incident, as later discussed, was observed in a year 8 French lesson.

The class in question were high ability with good attitudes towards learning. There were around twenty-five students. Generally, the students were quiet and attentive. There was no notably bad behaviour from any student, bar some unintrusive talking, as is to be expected in a classroom. All work was completed in a timely manner and student-teacher interactions were plentiful. The students seemed generally happy in themselves and were content to carry out the work set. Collaboration and 'helpfulness' seemed to be engrained in the classroom culture and were actively encouraged. This was seen in the groupwork as well as in students volunteering to help the teacher with collecting teaching aids from other classrooms, handing out books and worksheets etc. This shows that the students were willing to contribute to the progress of their class beyond simply completing their work.

Methodology

Style of education research

In order to implement the findings from an observed critical incident into future practise, the nature of said observation needs to be decided. Given that the purpose of the bridging was to take real-world observations and apply them later to real-world teaching, a case study is the most logical analysis method as the data acquired is qualitative, not quantitative. What is of interest in this observation is the cause and repercussions of an event.

Case studies, as highlighted by Nisbet and Watt (1984) have strengths and weaknesses as a means of education research. Case studies have the potential to yield conclusions on a much more personal level than a more numerically data driven study, such as a survey, and they can highlight complex theoretical knowledge in everyday scenarios. Their effects are not lost into the realm of abstract and perfect models. They involve small-scale, real world cases, sensitive to the unique environment and circumstances of the school, teachers, and pupils. In much the same way that you cannot assume all adults make perfect financial decisions in an economical model, you cannot assume that all educational stakeholders will react in predictable manners to predictable situations.

Case studies are not perfect, however, as it can be difficult to remove observer and participant bias, especially in an industry as academically and politically charged as education. Given the uniqueness of each case, the findings may not be reproducible in another, or even the same, environment. It may also be the case that although the findings are directly applicable to a certain demographic of schools or students, they may not fit into a different educational system. For example, a case study from a British state school may not be representative of a Japanese high school or even a British private school.

Strategy for data collection and research

Flick, 1998 propose defining an observation around five parameters, each discussed in this section.

Observation of others and observation environment

The purpose of visiting the school was to observe students and teachers in as natural of an environment as possible, such that their actions and interactions were as representative as possible. This meant that data collection methods such as questionnaires and interviews were simply inappropriate for the brief. The observation took place in a standard French lesson. The purpose of the observation was to observe no event in particular, but to observe some kind of incident that would seem unimportant and might usually go unnoticed. Through analysis, this key incident would be made critical and the possibility of using it to inspire future practice would be examined.

Unstructured observation

As the incident of interest was not known prior to the observation, the observation could be said to be unstructured. Whereas structured observations are conducted with the intention to test a preconceived hypothesis, unstructured observations themselves generate a hypothesis to be later examined (Cohen, et al., 2007)

Observer participation and covert observation

Given that it was imperative to maintain as normal of a classroom atmosphere as possible, an 'observer-as-participant' (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) approach was taken, whereby the observer sat at the back of the classroom taking notes in silence with no interaction with students. Ideally a 'complete observer' based method would have been used, removing the observer from the room, however this was not feasible in the timescale. The primary reason for aiming for as little observer participation as possible was to avoid an unnatural influence upon the student. It cannot be assumed that teachers and, in particular, students will act in a representative manner under observation (TISSD Method Library, 2020). Covert observation, when teachers and students are unaware that they are being observed, aims to reduce observer bias in those being observed.

Critical incident linked to Donaldson's Four Purposes

The critical incident of choice was observed in a year eight French class. The students were in set two, a high ability class. The class was near the beginning of the topic of 'locations' learning basic locational vocabulary (Appendices 1, 5). Due to Covid-19 the lesson was being carried out in an English classroom in which the students remained for almost all their lessons.

The incident took place towards the end of the lesson. The students had been writing some sentences in French to describe where they live. The students were in the middle of self-assessing their own responses based on the teacher's criteria, setting themselves targets. The teacher circulated around the front of the class, reading what the students had written in critique of their own work. After reading several

students' self-assessments, the teacher called for everyone's attention and announced "Don't write critiques for the sake of it. Think about what you can actually improve". This was in response to multiple students writing vague targets such as "practice vocabulary" or "work on spellings".

Self-assessment can become more useful when used in reflection, meaning to analyse one's work (or actions) in the hopes to learn from it. Simply marking one's work against a given mark scheme can be considered self-assessment, while analysing those results to develop meaningful targets for improvement can be considered reflection. There are two questions that should be considered to transform this mundane incident into a critical one:

Why do the students currently lack well-developed reflection skills?

This question allows a review of the development of students' skillsets and abilities as they progress throughout their school lives. What skills are expected by when and what caveats there may be which affect their ability to reflect to a high level.

Why do the students need well-developed reflection skills?

It is important to understand why students need high order reflection skills. If there is no benefit within school or in their personal lives, then the skill of reflection would not be necessary. Referring to the purposes (Dauncey, 2015), reflection relates to "ambitious and capable learners" as it allows students to learn from themselves, becoming more independent while doing so, as well as introducing them to the mindset of a teacher, resulting in more pedagogically-literate learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Why do the students currently lack well-developed reflection skills?

The current curriculum is somewhat vague in its expectations of students' abilities to reflect meaningfully from assessment. The Welsh Government (2013) indicates that students should be given the "opportunity to reflect and act on feedback they receive to make improvements to their own work". This sentiment is echoed throughout the document, but little guidance is given as to the students' responsibility to focus on, or the teachers' responsibility to encourage reflection. Teachers simply must allow time for students to reflect. Most instances of reflection within the document refer to teachers and their practise.

The Welsh Government, (2010) highlight the importance of assessment for learning and self-assessment but in the context of aiding the teacher and to "inform reports to parents/carers". The attitude towards assessment for learning here is one of dependency on teachers to guide progress. Students should "understand and agree where they next need to get to" rather than deciding themselves where they need to be and how to get there.

The tone of the new curriculum implies a much more autonomous attitude towards assessment for learning and actively encourages reflection from self-assessment. The purpose of assessment (Welsh Government, 2020) breaks down the

responsibilities of leaders, practitioners, students, and parents. While the new curriculum agrees with the old with regards to the idea that students should understand their current position in learning and where they should aim, it takes a further step and proposes that students should have a much more active role in their progression. Students are encouraged to “respond actively to feedback, review their progression in learning and articulate this both individually and with others, reflect on their learning journey and develop responsibility for their own learning over time”.

This push towards student responsibility is the key differentiator between the old and new curricula’s attitude towards assessment for learning. The foundational idea that students should be ambitious, capable learners was not instrumental in the formation of the old curriculum and this manifests itself in the presence of students’ reliance on teacher guidance and consequently their lack of adequate reflection skills.

Beyond the curriculum, the mental development of students may also have an effect. The students observed were aged twelve to thirteen years.

Piaget’s theory of cognitive development (Cherry, 2020) breaks down cognitive development into four key stages; Sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete and formal operational. The formal operational stage is concerned with cognitive development at around age twelve years and above. This stage involves the ability to systematically plan and prepare for the future which, in this case, is planning how to improve a skill or knowledge base in response to assessment.

Stel (2011) targeted this cognitive stage when investigating metacognitive ability in students aged twelve to fifteen years. Metacognition, meaning to think about thinking, is a higher order thinking skill referring, in this case, to the process of students assessing their performance and identifying strategies for learning to improve it.

The primary conclusion drawn from this study is that, while students of this age are typically developing the desired metacognitive skills, there is no set timeline. One cohort of students may show seemingly continuous linear developments in metacognitive skills between the ages of twelve and fifteen, others may show non-linear improvement or even periods of regression.

This means that for the context of the aforementioned critical incident, naturally late development of metacognitive skills cannot be ruled out, however, it can be inferred that this is not the case as the problem was seen with uniformity across the entire high-ability class of around twenty-five. While not impossible, this would be unlikely.

It is well known that deprivation correlates negatively with attainment at school. Given that the observation was made in a school catering to an area of high deprivation, the students’ reflection skills may be behind where they would be expected by both natural development and in the curriculum.

The Department for Education (2018) groups schools into quintiles based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Free school meals in this case are used as an indicator of deprivation. Each quintile group was separated into pupils eligible and ineligible for free school meals and their attainment 8 scores were

recorded. Two clear trends are highlighted. The first is that as the level of deprivation (proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals) increases, the average attainment 8 score decreases. The second is the more deprived the school, the closer in attainment pupils eligible and ineligible are. So not only does deprivation negatively affect those eligible for free school meals, but it also affects those who are not.

Given that the school observed has a proportion of students eligible for free school meals considerably higher than the UK average (around thirty percent compared to fourteen), it can be inferred that attainment in general will be below expectations; this includes development of metacognitive, and thus, reflection skills. (Department for Education, 2018)

The observation took place under special circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic. A result of this is that most students in the United Kingdom missed at least six months of school, with additional time missed due to local lockdowns. This in place of, or perhaps in addition to the local deprivation may have had an effect on the students' level of reflection skill. It could be the case that students missed lessons that would have focussed on developing these skills. It could also be that the students were already developing these skills but have not had the opportunity to regularly recall and repeat. The long-term effects of COVID-19 on the education and development of students is not yet known.

Why do the students need well-developed reflection skills?

Three schools of thought in education, Behaviourism, constructivism, and humanism all have their own guidelines on how assessment and its subsequent reflection should be utilised within a school setting.

Behaviourists highlight the importance of feedback while working, in essence constant, miniature, positively toned formative assessment (Theadore, n.d.). Rather than only praising small victories in work and behaviour, teachers could apply the same attitude towards self-reflection. Positively reinforcing events reminiscent of well-developed reflection early on, may cause students to seek out praise by constantly reflecting on their work and behaviour, naturally leading to the desired level of reflection ability while maintaining good academic practise.

One of the defining principles of constructivism is the idea that learners must construct their own learning (McLeod, 2019). There should be a level of autonomy to avoid over-reliance on the teacher which inevitably leads to rote learning as the student simply tries to meet someone else's standard, taking their advice at face value.

Taking the time to think not only about the topic at hand but also at the strategy best suited to improve knowledge of that topic can not only strengthen the bonds within the student's subject schema but also build new bonds as non-trivial links between topic sub-areas are discovered. For example, if a student struggles with memorising the rules of trigonometry, they can spend time reinforcing what was taught in the lesson. They may also decide that the best course of action is to read around what the teacher has told them and may decide to research where the rules come from.

This could result in a new schema bond forming between their idea of trigonometry and algebra as the two are intrinsically linked.

Constructivists encourage students to check each other's work. Self-reflection does not mean that the student alone is expected to figure out how to improve. By checking the work of their peers, students can see how someone with their level of understanding of a topic, not a teacher, thinks about it. Not only does this cause initially challenging subject matter to become more digestible, it can also inspire a culture of collaboration within the classroom. In constructivism, the teacher's job is not so much to teach a subject, but to guide students through a subject as they teach themselves.

The humanistic school of thought aligns with the constructivist school with regards to their ideas on student independence albeit for slightly different reasons. Whereas constructivists are concerned primarily with efficient and effective learning, humanists are more interested in ensuring students have good mental health and are satisfied with their own achievements.

The humanistic school of thought encourages students to set their own targets for the purpose of meeting their own needs (Western Governors University, 2020). This could manifest as a system where the teacher is only made aware of students' scores and targets when they are ready to share them, encouraging independence and reducing the fear of embarrassment. This independence can be scaffolded by providing students with training on how to effectively reflect on assessment, initially from the teacher and consequently from themselves.

The greater level of control given to students over when they can submit their marks may help further develop their reflection skills. For example, if a student is told to reflect on the results of a failed test, they may set themselves targets and strategize how to achieve them. However, if they can only do this once per test, they may find that their strategies were ineffective, and their result may only change minutely. At this point the students may doubt the efficacy of self-reflection and may become more dependent on the teacher, asking for advice on how to improve. If, however, the students can submit their results when they are happy with them, they may adopt a 'trial and improvement' system of self-reflection. Students may repeatedly reflect on the same assessment; their reflection skills may then improve by iteration.

By figuring out what works for them themselves, their knowledge and skillset around reflection would be stronger than if they were simply instructed on how to do so. This is where the humanistic and constructivist schools of thought can work collaboratively.

REFLECTION / EVALUATION & NEXT STEPS

Two instigating factors discussed earlier are likely to have been involved in the formation of the critical incident. One is the attitude of the current curriculum for Wales with regards to student autonomy and assessment. The second is the level of deprivation in the community for which the school caters. It is not clear if these are the only contributing factors. It could be the case that there are factors not discussed or even considered contribute to low levels of reflection ability as well as discussed

factors, such as COVID-19, not being quantifiable at this time. If possible, it would be beneficial to observe the metacognitive skills of students in a wide variety of schools with differing academic abilities to gain a fuller picture.

The most obvious way in which this incident can be avoided in the future is to proceed with the attitude shift seen in the new curriculum. By placing a greater emphasis on self-reflection and baking it into the very core of the curriculum, students will naturally become more adept at it. Like any skill, the more it is practiced, the better it becomes. It is possible that improving other factors, such as local deprivation, may also improve students' self-reflection skills, along with all other aspects of their education, however this is speculation without further investigation.

A suggestion as to what should happen next for the class could be to set aside some time in lessons to workshop self-reflection skills. Given the otherwise high ability of the class, they will likely be receptive to instruction aiming to improve these skills and will be capable of understanding why they are important.

The purpose of the bridging exercise was ultimately to inform good practise in a trainee teacher. A case study of a critical incident helps to achieve this in two ways. First, it highlights the importance of everyday incidents and introduces the idea that theories behind learning can be applied to real world scenarios. For example, theories about child development as it relates deprivation and independence as previously discussed. Second, and perhaps most importantly, it introduces the trainee teacher to the concept of continuous professional development. The overarching theme throughout Clay & Weston (2018) is that teachers often feel that opportunities for professional development are lacking. This concern for teachers can be at least partially improved by the continuous use of critical incident analysis as suggested by Tripp. The importance of this may not immediately be apparent to a trainee teacher. It is not sufficient to simply learn how to be a good teacher, one must also learn how to examine their own practise and reflect upon it to improve, much like the students involved within the critical incident itself.

The process used within this reflection exercise is reminiscent of the three stem questions developed by John Driscoll. The process of analysing an observed critical incident requires one to ask, 'what happened?', 'why is it important?', and 'what should happen next?'

This case study has set the groundwork for me to develop professionally and personally in the field of education. There are three areas of thinking that I will endeavour to revisit constantly throughout my career.

The first is to always be mindful of the school context. Outside of self-reflection, it is clear that levels of deprivation have a profound impact on students' education, whether that be knowledge or skills. The socioeconomic context of whatever institute I work in will inform the nature of my practice. It will influence what my preconceived expectations of students will be and whether I prioritise skill or knowledge education as a first port of call for each class.

The second is the relationship between the students and I. It is natural for trainee teachers to expect the status quo within a classroom to be one where the teacher

simply teaches students the content of the curriculum. The Donaldson reforms seek to highlight the importance of giving students the skillset required to help themselves and to avoid over-reliance on teachers. This seems strange at first as my practice would have initially resembled what I saw from my own schoolteachers. It is important to note that my own education occurred before the Donaldson reforms. I understand and agree with the new curriculum's idea of encouraging students' self-reflection and will aim to implement it wherever appropriate throughout my practise,

Finally, is to constantly evaluate and reflect on my own practise. The primary purpose of Tripp 1993 is to encourage constant reflection on my own and my colleagues practise and to improve over time. It seems fitting that if it is critical for students to possess the skills to meaningfully reflect upon and improve their own work, then the teachers who encourage this should lead by example.

CONCLUSION

To improve their professional practise student teachers conducted observations in a local secondary school. The students were not looking for anything in particular, instead just noting down any and all mundane incidents that occurred. One of these incidents was analysed, looking at its cause and future implications, turning it into a critical incident as explained by Tripp (1993). The reason for doing this was so that the trainee teachers could use this incident, along with the observational methodology, to inform their own practise when they start their careers.

The observation method used, an unstructured observer-as-participant approach, was appropriate for the task as it allowed for real-world evidence to be gathered. It is important not only for the trainee teachers to be aware of the results of this observation, but of the practicability of the observation method itself.

A more scientific and data heavy study could be argued to produce more valid results and conclusions as well as remove observer bias, but the applicability to real-world practise improvements could be limited.

The professional standards require teachers to constantly extend their knowledge, skills and understanding through reflection and support. This should translate to improved pedagogy, and more importantly, improved outcomes for students. Given the uniqueness of every school, district, and student, it is more important for trainee teachers to experience reflective practise than simply applying the results drawn from analysed school-related data sets. This way they can improve their practise while tailoring pedagogy to the students they teach, not the national average.

It is expected of students that they learn how to reflect on their results, ever strategizing on how to achieve the best results they can. It is imperative that teachers lead by example, as their professional development not only affects themselves, but also the students they teach.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group: 28/09/20
First period.
Year 8.

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).
AoLE - French (MFL).
Near start of unit - doing locational vocabulary.
Indoors.
High ability - Set 2
All lessons for this class took place in an english classroom with revolving teachers due to Covid 19.

Classroom culture

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

Attitudes towards learning seem good. Children are quiet and attentive.
The only negative behaviour seen was some minor chit-chat and calling out during self-assessment time.

No notably bad behaviour from any student. All work was completed in a timely manner and student-teacher interactions were plentiful. The children seemed generally happy in themselves and content to carry out the work.

Collaboration and 'helpfulness' seemed to be a part of the culture within the classroom and was encouraged. This was seen in the groupwork as well as in students volunteering to help the teacher with collecting teaching aids from other classrooms,

handing out books and worksheets etc. This shows that the children were willing to contribute to the progress of their class beyond simply completing their work.

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?)

Two whiteboards were used. One interactive for displaying powerpoints, the other classic for contextual work, such as queries about place names or negatives/affirmatives.

The register as well as countdowns were spoken in French, creating a much more immersive lesson.

Beyond simply copying vocabulary, the children engaged in a vocab game involving ever embiggening French sentences being repeatedly spoken as per the rules of the game. The game involved students working in pairs.

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?)

All vocab was linked to the students personally. 'I live in a house/flat in wales/Swansea etc'. This is important for helping children understand the relevance of what they are learning.

Interpersonal games helped the children understand what they are saying by being able to link vocabulary, regarding home types etc, to their friends whose home situations they already know.

Posters around the room highlight progression targets for keystages/years/levels for the subject of English (English classroom). It stands to reason that this is a schoolwide approach so is relevant for usual French classes.

Access and challenge

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

When constructing sentences, all correct sentences were praised. The longer and more complex the sentence the greater the level of praise. This allows for children to essentially choose their own level of challenge depending on their confidence - humanitarian approach.

Due to the fact that this lesson took place in an English classroom, the environment had nothing to display with regards to the subject of French.

In order to avoid fear of failure, students were often asked to answer questions all at once. This allowed the teacher to ensure that the bulk of the class had the right idea, without the pressure being put in a singled-out child,

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)?

Before the lesson's vocab was taught, the children were asked to construct and then read aloud sentences pertaining to location, without writing them out. After the lesson's vocab was taught, they were encouraged to construct more complex sentences. The longer and more complex the sentences, the more praise was received from the teacher.

Prior to all teaching, students peer marked a spelling test from the previous lesson.

Interpersonal games sought to assess children's vocabulary in the form of friendly competition. It is possible that the children hold their friend's opinions in as high regard as the teacher's.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

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

- Teacher had no glue for students as this was not his classroom. Student (who knows the class better) locates glue immediately and informs teacher. Teacher is grateful and lesson proceeds as planned. A more collaborative approach between students and teachers may be welcomed. Children feel less spoken to and can contribute to success beyond just learning.
- When self-assessing the teacher stated "Don't write critiques for the sake of it. Think about what to improve". This can allow students to take pride in a piece of well-done work without needing to rip it to shreds, as well as emphasising the importance of in-depth critique when it is needed. Teaching children the skill of good self-assessment can make them more independent and will provide more capable learners.
- Teacher calls out student for drawing instead of listening. Teacher immediately asks her a question. The student, caught off-guard, manages to answer correctly. This could emphasise the importance of paying attention to the

student. They will not always know the answer. Beyond the academic setting, paying attention to your situation, such as work or your surroundings, will create a more successful and considerate person.

- After a brief thinking period, the teacher asked the student to all say their answers aloud at the same time. You may assume this would make it impossible for the teacher to assess every student. The point is to ensure that the bulk of the class are along the right lines without having to apply additional stress to individual students or use up a large amount of time assessing each student individually. The student will realise that, generally speaking, they are on the same level as their classmates and that the fear of failure is generally unnecessary in the school setting.
- Child asks teacher about a French swear. Teacher discourages this by stating a similar sounding word the student could use instead. Teacher seemed proud of the further French knowledge but encouraged professional language only. Student found the incident humorous. It was important for the student to understand that the language choice was not appropriate for a professional setting, but the teacher's reaction encouraged the pursuit of extra vocabulary. This has professional, ethical and informative repercussions - following the four purposes.

Appendix 2

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group:

28/09/20

2nd lesson

Year 8

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).

AoLE - Mathematics

Start of topic

Indoors

High ability - Set 2

Due to Covid 19, the lesson took place in an English classroom.

Due to scheduling issues, this was only the second lesson in 5 weeks for this class.

Classroom culture

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

Attitudes towards learning seem good. Children are quiet and attentive. The only negative behaviour seen was some minor chit-chat and calling out during self-assessment time.

No notably bad behaviour from any student. All work was completed in a timely manner and student-teacher interactions were plentiful. The children seemed generally happy in themselves and content to carry out the work.

Collaboration and 'helpfulness' seemed to be a part of the culture within the classroom and was encouraged. This was seen in the groupwork as well as in students volunteering to help the teacher with collecting teaching aids from other classrooms, handing out books and worksheets etc. This shows that the children were willing to contribute to the progress of their class beyond simply completing their work.

There appeared to be a particular emphasis on helping other students through collaborative working. The tasks were set to be completed individually, but helping those around you was welcomed.

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?)

This maths lesson focussed on working through questions rather than teaching new material. This in combination with the lesson taking place in an English classroom meant that there was no noticeable environmental communication pertaining to mathematics.

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?)

Mathematics questions were asked via question sheets decorated with characters and through a couple of different games and puzzles.

Interpersonal games allowed brighter students to help those who were struggling in a one on one fashion - useful as teacher circulation is difficult due to Covid 19.

Access and challenge

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

Students were given a year-long booklet to work through. The booklet contains both mental and written exercises progressing from simple arithmetic to start the year, to more advanced material. These are then peer-assessed. At the end of the year, the child with the highest average is rewarded with sweets.

The students' starting task began with easy questions and progressed into an extremely difficult question. This ensures that all students are actively engaged to start the lesson.

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?)

To begin the lesson, students worked through a short recap exercise sheet to assess what they had learnt in the previous lesson.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

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

Towards the end of the lesson the teacher announced that if the class worked extra hard and finished their work then they'd be allowed to play a game for the last 10 minutes. The class did this and thus ended the lesson with a game. This incentive encouraged efficient and quiet working from the class. This can introduce the idea of hard work yielding good results for the students.

Appendix 3**OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES**

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group: 28/09/20

Third period.

Year 8.

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).

AoLE - Religious education (Humanities).

Near start of unit -Studying story of Moses within the theme of leadership.

Indoors.

High ability - Set 2

All lessons for this class took place in an English classroom with revolving teachers due to Covid 19.

Classroom culture

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

Attitudes towards learning seem good. Children are quiet and attentive.

The only negative behaviour seen was some minor chit-chat and calling out during self-assessment time.

No notably bad behaviour from any student. All work was completed in a timely manner and student-teacher interactions were plentiful. The children seemed generally happy in themselves and content to carry out the work.

Collaboration and 'helpfulness' seemed to be a part of the culture within the classroom and was encouraged. This was seen in the groupwork as well as in students volunteering to help the teacher with collecting teaching aids from other classrooms, handing out books and worksheets etc. This shows that the children were willing to contribute to the progress of their class beyond simply completing their work.

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?)

Direction

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

The teacher played an extended clip from the film 'The prince of Egypt' showing the ten plagues. This was used to illustrate exactly what happened in the bible story. Once the students had a solid idea, they were asked to think about how this relates to the theme of leadership.

Access and challenge

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

The teacher instructed the students to aim high in their forthcoming assessment. She expects level 6s and 7s across the board. The project is open ended, the students are being given almost free reign, so the assessment criteria are more generic.

Assessment

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

The lesson started with a quick recap of the previous lesson. Part of the lesson was spent discussing the aforementioned assignment. The assessment for this topic is based entirely on this assignment, so no normal homework. The open-ended nature of the assignment 'pick a religious leader and explore how they represent the qualities of leadership and how they relate to your own values' is indicative of the lack of hand-holding required by this class.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

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

When informing the students about their assignment, the teacher says 'Just note down whatever you need. Don't worry about copying it all down'. This is indicative of the level of trust in this sets' abilities and will provide a level of autonomy, responsibility and confidence in the students.

Appendix 4

OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES

(Questions adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016))

Date and time, year group:

28/09/20

Fourth period.

Year 8.

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).

AoLE - English.

Near start of unit - doing locational vocabulary.

Indoors.

Low ability - Set 5/ALN

Due to issues with regards to scheduling, I arrived partway through this lesson and left a while before the end, so observation time was limited.

Classroom culture

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

Attitudes to learning in the lesson were mixed. Some of the students quietly got on with their work in silence, while the majority of the class were very loud and disruptive, often shouting, playing and moving around the room. One student slept in the corner of the room with his hood up.

None of the behaviour in the class was particularly naughty, or malicious, but the disruption resulted in very little work getting done. The students spent the entire lesson correcting their friends' spellings from a previous test.

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 objective of the lesson, marking each other's work, along with instructions on how to do so remained on the board for the duration of the lesson.

Direction

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

The students required constant attention and feedback to maintain concentration and understanding of the task at hand. The teacher had to circulate (as best she could with Covid 19) around the class providing instructions. It seemed difficult for the students to maintain focus. In addition to the teacher circulating, the instructions were left on the board.

Access and challenge

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

In order to provide a sense of importance to the work, the students were asked to mark each other's work.

Students were told not to make more than three corrections per page, this is to stop embarrassment as well as lightening the workload.

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)?

Repetition of previously covered English rules (SPaG) was used to (hopefully) increase likelihood of retention.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

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

Student was dance at the back of the class to amuse his friend. The teacher asked him to stop, which he did. However, the student almost immediately continued to mess around with his friend, resulting in the teacher moving him to the front of the class.

In a class with chronic behaviour issues, it is important for the students to understand that the teacher is not against them. They have chances, but repercussions will come if they continue to not work. This could act as an early warning of societal/workplace repercussions for undesirable behaviour.

Appendix 5

CRITICAL INCIDENT IDENTIFICATION RECORD

Details relevant to the research context. Date/time. Age/Stage of group. People involved. Contextual information from field notes.	AoLE - French (MFL). Near start of unit - doing locational vocabulary. Indoors. High ability - Set 2 All lessons for this class took place in an English classroom with revolving teachers due to Covid 19.
<i>What happened? A detailed decription of what you observed and what thoughts on pedagogy and practice occurred to you as a result, looking</i>	When self-assessing the teacher stated “Don’t write critiques for the sake of it. Think about what you can actually improve”. This can allow students to take pride in a piece of well-done work without needing to rip it to shreds, as well as emphasising the importance of in-depth critique when it is needed. Teaching children the skill of good self-assessment can make them more independent and will provide more capable learners.

*towards your
research.*