

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

Introduction

In this assignment I will be looking at several incidents in the classroom and making some notes based on my observations. These incidents will be known as critical incidents. When it comes to critical incidents in the classroom its interpreted as an important incident therefore the means to break it down and analyse or study further is an option. I will be discussing the role of a critical incident and how it links with Donald's purpose as well as looking back and reflecting on and identifying the next steps I would undertake. To begin with we were given the task of looking at a class and identifying what the critical incident might be. The easy thing to think about when looking for a critical incident is to try and find something more negative as it is more prominent and tends to be a bit easier to find but after reviewing the clip several times, I could see that I started getting drawn to several other moments not just a negative one. I had to review online so I was fortunate enough to re watch the clips. The words I needed to remember was 'important' or 'relevant' once I got my head around those words everything became clearer for me as I saw things I might have missed in the beginning. The next step was to find sources of material that backed what I was going to say regarding the incident and how I would go about dealing with it which will be further down.

The Role of Critical reflection

So, what do I believe is the role of critical reflection? Reflecting to begin with helps someone look back on what they have done or an incident that's occurred over time. Once something is reflected it can then be analysed further or it can be evaluated which will help break down and help you see what could have been done different or in a teacher's case what worked and what did not work. Its important in the industry of education the teacher in charge can also be critical with themselves prior to their different characteristics, education, background they would have a wealth of knowledge or unique skills that could benefits themselves and others. The main concept of teaching in my opinion is to try and feel what your students are feeling and to do that you need to reflect on the way you purpose ideas to the class or maybe the way you conduct yourself while doing the register. Children are always thinking no matter what kind of day the cognitive load is always turning That should also be the role of a teacher to constant go above and beyond to try to find a solution or to make the children see things in a way that makes sense to them. The purpose of doing research is to find things through different methods be that a scientific or a philosophical theory that you need to find the correct source of material from, it can also be from a wealth of knowledge passed on by generation to generation that you just need to unlock or find. People can bring different ideas to the table where maybe the other person did not think or won't allow themselves to think that far.

No one is ever perfect and there is always room for improvement the same can be said in a classroom filled with children, one way of getting a child involved in the reflecting side of things is asking different question, 'how was the lesson?' 'did you understand it the topic fully?' Children are the best source of information when it comes to reflecting in the school because they are the ones that go through the same day repeatedly and they are very smart when it comes to what they want and giving children a say makes them feel more connected not only to the teacher but to each lesson they attend as it's a collective idea based on analysing and evaluating and then pushing forward together as a class. In short critical reflection is a key part in becoming a teacher because you need to be able to look and back on everything in order to help you move forward with a much clearer purpose.

OBSERVATION school & Class Context

I was given over eight different clips to look at in the primary sector ranging from year 1 all the way to year 6. I have had numerous experiences in different schools as a teaching assistant so I also used that side of it to reflect on how I would go about viewing the clips and what I would try and look for. I chose the clip of a school where the class of year one pupils were learning about phonics, so a method used to help children read and write by demonstrating different sounds in order to coincide with the words or pictures on the card. The reason I chose the clip I thought it benefited me best as I have had a long time in helping teach that year group, so I have my opinions on what works and what maybe needs tweaking a bit in order to work. Seeing as the main goal is to always reflect on what you are witnessing it was easier for me to look at that clip cause all the ideas came flooding in instantly. The reason the clip stood out was how the teacher was so in charge and dealt with the children well in order to try and get the best from each one of them. In a class that big it's easy for some children to be quiet or go unnoticed but she always kept attention on her and had different methods of getting answers off the children.

Critical incidents linked to Donaldson's four purposes

When researching into the video clip there were numerous different types of incidents, I could have chosen from, but I went with a simple one, it was a very subtle piece and at first, I missed it but once I got the hold of it I had so much input in what was achieved I decided to look more into the incident. The teacher was teaching phonics in a way that all the children were sat down, and she was going through some cards with different types of words on them, the words all had the same letters but each of the words made a different kind of sound. She was using the technique known as recognition, so she had developed an action to go with sound in order to help the children remember and by doing the action first the children then went ahead and said what was on the card. She gave the independence to the children to say the words but prompted them by doing the action first. She went around asking several different children on how to pronounce each card and once they got it correct, she would congratulate and move on. She came to the word 'Ai' that's when she asked a different child what the word was and there was a brief pause where the child could not answer so she kept the prompt by doing the same action over and over again but there was no response from the child

but then the critical incident itself happened as she turned to ask the class “Can anyone help him?” all the class were eager in order to answer but then the child put his hand up and the teacher went straight back to him so he could give his answer and once he successfully got it she instantly congratulated and moved on again taking in no attention on how long the child took to answer. This link with one of many of Donaldson’s four purposes but the one I identified as best was the ‘healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead a fulfilling life as a valued member of society’ that teacher in such a moment might have changed that child’s future forever by giving him the ability to think and act on his own accord. It could have been so easy to ask any other pupil as they were all desperate to answer and help their classmate but instead by giving that child a tiny bit of leeway he got the confidence to stand up and answer for himself even though at first he might have struggled to process the question, there could be many different factors on why he might have taken longer than average to answer the question it is all to do with how some people think differently to others and some act quicker than others. The key word was being an ‘individual’ the same goes for the rest of the class everyone is an individual and it is important that as an individual you get the chance to learn or gain confidence or just find your own way of doing things and that’s why I believe it fits into this purpose the best as important as it is that children learn about all kinds of things in schools you can never take away how important the health and the mind of the child is and in my opinion it is one of the key stages of learning and adapting over time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The key part of the critical incident for myself was to focus on the mind of a child and to go about learning about cognitive behaviour. In order to become a successful teacher, you need to find that one piece of evidence that can help you understand or prompt you when making decisions about the class in the future. I investigated the different kinds of material and books out there that could help me understand more about what I saw and how it might benefit me in the future, after researching I came across a book called ‘Changing our minds – Naomi Fisher’. The reason I went with the book was that I was eager to understand how I can go about and give the children the freedom to learn as the book focuses on the importance of choice. *“Oddly, these ideas about education aren’t new or particularly radical. Educators have noticed for centuries that children learn better when they can choose what they do. In the 1860s, Leo Tolstoy set up a school for peasant children on his estate, Yasnaya Polyana. There, attendance was optional, and education started with the children’s interest. Tolstoy wrote: ‘The more convenient a method of instruction is for the teacher, the less convenient for the pupils. The only right way of teaching is that which is satisfactory for the pupils.’”* (Fisher 2021, p. 22)

Although I have my opinions regarding the first part of the quotes in stating that ‘attendance was optional’ it’s the reminder of the quote that I can resonate with especially the bit where it goes on to talk about the right way of teaching? I think the beauty of teaching is that there is not a right or wrong way in going around doing things. Teachers work with a set of rules from the curriculum but that does not mean that they need to stick to every single one but to use it as guidance or an opportunity to bring forward to the children and see what they think about the situation and what

they would like to learn because at the end of the day what matters most in every school is that each pupil get the opportunity to learn, yes cases will vary because not each child is the same they have different levels and abilities, some learn quicker by doing, some learn quicker by reading that's the joy of being in a school environment there is so many different angles you can approach things but when it comes to the thick of it the children have such an important role in helping develop your skills as a teacher.

Once I found that book, I understood that I needed to look into the cognitive load theory because to me its best to try and analyse why that child reacted in the way that he did so by looking into the cognitive load theory I would get a better understanding of what exactly goes on in such a short space of time so I found a book called (Cognitive load Theory – John Sweller) The book takes you into the more advance stage of what cognitive load theory is and how people tend to use it without knowing. Upon reading a few chapters I came across a piece that supported my own theory in how people tend to go about and use individual methods in order to get the best out of themselves and to get a better sense of what they are learning. *“Withing cognitive load framework, the redundancy effect is explained by the increases in extraneous cognitive load generated by the need to process redundant information. Learners who are presented with several sources of essentially the same information simultaneously such as written and spoken text may need to attempt to coordinate them. Randomly searching for connections between elements from different sources of information that are not related to the learning goal can produce heavy demands on working memory and thus be detrimental to learning.”* (Sweller, 2003 p.154) I found this quote to be most helpful to my own understanding of why certain things happen for myself I learn an awful better by doing as I put a motion in to something which then works like muscle memory so by putting two and two together, I can remember a lot better as if I was just sitting down to read a text etc. This works well with children in my opinion as a child is not fully developed yet therefore can't maybe fathom things, we as adults can so in order to help them learn we put an action or a movement in to play and see where we go from there. Everyone is different and everyone has a way of getting around problems that face them on a daily basis, reading a book or a text at first might not sink in but then if you can add an element of your own be that a song or a picture that helps you to understand the theory side of things a lot better it can be a massive help in the future. Going back to my earlier critical incident the teacher only gave an action she did not do much else but because the action coincided with how the children perceived that single word it made things a lot mor simpler for them, which further more goes back to the earlier point of letting that child make a choice for themselves in what the best way is for them to tackle these issues, the guidelines are put in place but it is up to the individual themselves to go about finding what clicks for them or what does not and then bring it to the attention of others.

Soon I figured I was researching into the mind and that fits under the whole psychology concept, so it was important for me to find out a bit more about the theory based around what goes on in a child's mind? I looked into B. Skinner and what would happen after that critical incident occurred, I have supported why I think

it happened and if I believed it benefited the pupil or not and have used other research in order to try and get more information to help my judgment, but I needed to figure out what would happen next? I have my own ideas on maybe what would, but I needed to find eligible evidence that backed my claim up. I believe by giving that child a tiny glimpse of what he could do on his own could have started a chain reaction in other parts of his life, just by that one good judgement to teacher made to let him answer after at first, he could not of benefited the child a lot more than if he was to answer straight away. *“Through operant conditioning behaviour which is reinforced (rewarded) will likely be repeated, and behaviour which is punished will occur less frequently”* (S.McLeod, 2018) This article helped me in order to approve me own theories on what would of happened? In general rewarding someone makes themselves feel good and it gives away that pride and confidence maybe they did not have in the first place. Some children look for encouragement all the time and by giving them the tiny glimpse of what happens when they do well could benefit them in the long terms and like I stated earlier it can give the child a different perspective on what life is, just all happens with that tiny bit of freedom and then the rest is up to how you go about maybe keeping hold of that engagement or if you choose to let the child be more independent I guess that when you have to reflect on what happened and how things will go about after the incident. The main goal as a teacher is to get the best out of all your pupils but maybe in order to do that you have to be selective in what you choose or the methods you go about when it comes to teaching, this again goes back to you as an individual and the reflection you need in order to evaluate yourself all the time and find that something that works to not only benefit yourself in becoming the best teacher you can be but also most importantly benefits each child that walks through your door.

REFLECTION / EVALUATION & NEXT STEPS

As I look back and reflect on the critical incident it has made thing a lot clearer for myself as soon as we had the assignment, and I knew what I was on the lookout for I instantly went towards the negative side of things, and I think that is common as negative circumstances are easier to identity because normally, they are very prominent. There were several clips where they showed and demonstrated the negative side of a critical incident and how it might disrupt the class etc. I believe that the incidents reflect the type of person you are, and I think I’m a very positive person therefore I always try and find the good in everything or I try to find the best solution to deal with things, so it does not cause a negative environment. The research I have the put into the incident itself supports what I thought it was just a subtle easy to miss but so effective in the way that it not only helps the children involved but helps you as a teacher in a sense where you can look back and see at how simple it was to get someone to answer and to be given the independent freedom to work things out alone. If I was put in that position myself, I am not sure how I would of reacted because it seemed to be an impulse thing because sometimes you can not plan how your lessons are going to go and you can not plan on how engaged the children are going to be on that day.

The net steps I would suggest on taking is to look more into that individual and try and figure out what made him click as soon as the focus was away from him, was it

pressure? Or was it something else. There are plenty of materials out there online or in book form to try and help you understand why? Once the why has been asked its easier to go around finding a solution that could benefit the student but also benefit the teacher in learning themselves, I believe as a teacher you never stop learning because each pupil will challenge you with a different scenario and it is up to you to find that one way that works. I would also try and do the experiment again but this time maybe not using an action so they just have the card and to see if they can remember the sound the word makes without prompting them or to see how many of the children would have put the two together and done the action without thinking while saying the sound. The method is a confidence booster because you give that child freedom, they can find their own way in developing themselves as a person and like I stated earlier everyone is different so there will be so many ways and systems that they use in order to identify the task. The critical incidence has shown me methods for myself when developing to become a teacher regarding maybe giving that extra bit of time for someone to answer or less prompt and see where the level is so I could work around the task myself and become a better person. As a teacher you will always be tested and its important that you can handle whatever is thrown at you just like the teacher in the video did, she might have done it without thinking but once you do something, you can then go ahead reflect evaluate and add that to your arsenal for next time.

Conclusion

The approach I took on when I received the task was, I went in with prior knowledge to most of these different methods. I do not know an awful lot about the theory of becoming a teacher I have just had a lot more of a hands-on role each time. I assessed each clip that was given and figured what worked for myself and not was the easiest to spot etc. I used innovation to think differently about how I perceived things that I witnessed and in doing so gave me the outlook that I was looking for as I had so many unanswered questions but now I feel I have grown a lot and started to understand correctly what it takes to become the best teacher I can possibly be. I was always researching and learning new things, things I had found myself by doing the work required and not reading off texts that was already handed to me so I could try and scope out different alternatives and different answers I needed to help fulfil my task. I then went ahead and used the material that I had acquired to support point I was trying to make. In summary I feel that by thinking more theoretically about things rather than being there to experience it has helped in understanding what I need to do to achieve all the goals I have of becoming a teacher. There is a lot to learn but I feel I have taken a big step in understanding some fundamental part of the process I have had to follow guidelines and try to work under the instructions we were given to seek out something that was new to me and then to dissect why everything was happening.

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