

Sample sections from assignments

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All references have been withdrawn and changed to Reference (date).

Extract from an introduction

L1: Note the concise writing outlining author's intention

In this essay I will first discuss the literature surrounding the subject of teacher subject knowledge for primary teaching before evaluating and analysing my own knowledge base for primary teaching. I will base this analysis and evaluation on Professional Teaching Experience (PTE) within a placement school. I will be keeping the identity of the school, its staff and students confidential and anonymous and will thus refer to the school as School X, any names used have been changed to protect identities.

School X caters to pupils aged three to eleven. The area that it serves is 'predominantly affluent, but with pockets of social deprivation' (Reference, date) with 12% of students entitled to free school meals. Approximately 25% of students speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) and 10% have additional learning needs. I was placed in a Reception class with 30 students (19 male, 11 female) all aged 4-5 with birth dates between September 2011 and March 2012. The class teacher was assisted by two teaching assistants as well as two occasional volunteers.

Extracts from literature reviews

L1: Introducing the literature review: Note that the author draws together a range of points from a variety of sources, showing careful thought about key discussion points.

A teacher has a significant role in scaffolding children's knowledge and understanding it. Reference (date) suggests that this is only achievable when a teacher's subject knowledge is firmly in place. In Reference's (date) case study of the trainee teacher Colleen, it is clear that due to her insufficient knowledge of the subject within the lesson, the children's learning suffered; students were not offered any opportunities to ask questions or contribute to discussions surrounding the topic being taught. Consequently, Colleen's lack of confidence in the subject knowledge content, led to her not applying any effective pedagogy to the lesson, which meant she did not check for understanding or allow any opportunities to scaffold the children's thinking, thus impacting the effectiveness of the lesson and the learning outcome of the students. A constructivist view of learning deems that a children's contribution to the lesson is invaluable and to discourage or ignore them is

'wrong' (Reference, date). Reference (date) has also indicated that a teacher's lack of subject knowledge and confidence in mathematics has resulted in pupils achieving a low standard. Moreover, a study conducted by Reference (date), which examined the subject knowledge of both the students and the teachers, highlighted that a teacher's subject knowledge positively correlated to the students' academic achievement. Supporting this, a study by Reference (date) illustrates that having a better knowledge in the subject being taught allows teachers to directly address any misconceptions that might be found in class. Additionally, it is suggested that teachers with a larger scope on the subject knowledge generally have more confidence in the classroom, allowing them to be flexible and further develop their students thinking through Bloom's Taxonomy of questioning. This ultimately enables them to have a positive influence on their teaching practice Reference (date), subsequently indicating the significant effect that a teacher's subject knowledge has on the student's achievement. However, Reference's (date) study does not illustrate the pedagogical skills that may have been used, which might have played a significant role in the results produced. Therefore, what constitutes as effective teacher knowledge, is it determined by the level of subject knowledge one has, or is it established through the knowledge of pedagogy and how a teacher transfers their knowledge to students?

L2: Note the integration of texts, identification of key points and clarity of author's focus for subsequent paragraphs

The debate around the subject of teacher knowledge began with Reference's (date) seminal article, making the case that teaching has a knowledge base consisting of seven elements, three of which concern 'discipline knowledge', which is specific to the subject being taught. This was defined as 'quote given' (Reference, date, page given). Therefore, (Reference, date) suggested that a teacher's knowledge base should consist not just of educational purposes and values but also of specific subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge also specific to that subject.

There is some debate on what elements should be contained within the knowledge base and which are the most important of those elements. For example, Reference's (date) review, noted that the term teacher knowledge expanded over time and broadened significantly. Some studies, for example Reference (date) focussed on teacher knowledge as related to instructional competencies in the classroom as the key element of the knowledge base. On the other hand, Reference (date) were more concerned with the centrality of subject matter and curriculum subject knowledge. Here I will focus on the importance of subject matter knowledge in the context of a knowledge base for teaching.

L2: Note the synthesis of texts and identification of key points

This (building on a point made in previous paragraph) suggests that there is a need to take a broad perspective of the nature of subject knowledge and expertise, and acknowledge its interaction with other elements of good teaching. Indeed, in the connection between the teacher and learner the pedagogical beliefs of the teacher were considered by Reference (date) who determined that the beliefs of very good teachers shape their choice of teaching methodology and resulting effectiveness. Though support for this position is not universal, with research on the impact of teacher beliefs on pupil progress by Reference (date) finding no link, Reference (date) did observe that most benefit to learners from teachers' ongoing professional development came through linking with their personal values and pedagogical beliefs. Drawing together this and other considerations Reference (date), through their extended analysis of primary mathematics lessons, provide a useful framework for reflection on the acquisition, development and implementation of 'subject and methodological expertise' in their theory of 'The Knowledge Quartet'.

Extracts from Analysis and Evaluation of Subject Knowledge Section

AE1: Note the specific example, also linked to awareness of curriculum development which provides a basis for reflection

Whilst on teaching practice, I noticed one significant area in which my subject knowledge was lacking was regarding the Victorian era. As it was chosen as the class' topic for the term, nearly every lesson in all subject areas, particularly humanities was based on the topic. The lesson that I chose to reflect on (See appendix ...) was aimed at the Science and Technology area of learning suggested by Donaldson (2015) with a link to Expressive Arts and involved learners designing, creating and sewing a Victorian-themed sampler to create a patchwork quilt.

With very limited foundation knowledge before starting this practice and despite desperately researching the era, my confidence plummeted as I felt the children had more subject knowledge than myself. This was a strong indication that having foundation content knowledge before teaching a subject is important (Reference, date) and that having sufficient knowledge of content and the curriculum may have improved my teaching if I had improved my knowledge base (Reference, date).

Author went on to indicate how this could be overcome

AE2: Note the use of specific examples which provided basis for further discussion of subject knowledge

Mathematics is an abstract subject so it is useful to use physical or pictorial representations; the year one class I worked with used base ten equipment to aid their learning of the notion of place value (see Appendix 3 for lesson plan). I took my understanding for granted and as a result struggled to explain place value in a way the children could understand. Although I had a secure content knowledge of place value I had failed to recognise how this concept could be difficult given their age. Similarly, in an RE lesson about Diwali, I asked the children to think of similarities and differences between Diwali and a festival that they celebrate (see Appendix 5); this was a concept they struggled with immensely. Unfortunately, I struggled to think of a way to make this accessible to the children and battled on regardless.

Author went on to indicate how this could be overcome

AE3: Note the specific example, related to readings and with links to learning theory

This is reflected in the contingency stage of The Knowledge Quartet. When one pupil asked about the pH of the waste liquid created from the practical, he was building on what he had learned in a previous lesson. This was a fantastic question, one I had not even considered, but it was not strictly relevant to the lesson currently being taught.

I faced a dilemma: Reference (date) argue that whilst the teacher should take the additional query seriously and perhaps use it as the start of a later scientific enquiry, they cannot lose sight of the lesson's objectives. Reference (date) might disagree. As described by Reference (date), Reference's (named learning theory) states that the educator develops the child's learning by building on and extending what they already know. Although I recognised this as an opportunity to, I felt I had to balance this with remaining on track with the planned lesson

Furthermore, that this pupil's question was in fact beyond my own subject knowledge could have been problematic if not handled in a controlled and calm way. Reference (date) observe that gaps in subject knowledge exposed by a pupil can lead to anxiety, which in turn may lead to a dismissal of the question as unimportant. This, Reference (date), can drive low confidence and self-esteem in pupils, leading to a lack of effective learning.

Author went on to indicate how this was overcome.