

ECAD7004 Assignment

Student Number: 1300562

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How can we improve pupils' behaviour during lessons through positive reinforcement, using praise and dojo points?

	Targed/Target	Yr hyn yr wyf wedi'i wneud yn yr aseiniad hwn. What I have done in this assignment.
Targed/Target 1	Develop your critical thinking about your practice in order to identify what needs to change in order to make further progress.	I have tried to be more critical in this assignment, ensuring I have read more articles and books to give me a deeper understanding and critical view on behaviour and strategies to help guide me during this assignment.
Targed/Target 2	Continue to develop your understanding of the pedagogical principles to improve teaching and learning.	This is something I am continuing to do.
Targed/Target 3	Proof read your work before submitting to avoid SPAG inaccuracies.	I have proof read my work and had a family member to read through it too, to avoid SPAG inaccuracies.

The issue that interested me was praise and the way it was given in my Year 3/4 classroom in School X. This interested me because behaviour in School X has been an issue throughout the term, throughout the school and changes are currently being made to the behaviour policy. One strategy used was the use of class dojos and the amount given out. Class Dojo is a free computer based classroom management strategy that has over 35

million users (*Class Dojo, 2018., Krach et al., 2016*). This is something that interested my partner and I, as school X use the dojos more regularly than school Y. Our research question is how can we improve pupils' behaviour during lessons through positive reinforcement, using praise and dojo points? We wanted to find out how the pupils feel about the dojo system, positive reinforcement and receiving praise, and if it impacts on their behaviour, resulting in less low level disruptions during lessons. This interested us as *Wubbels (2007)* believes research shows behaviour and problems regarding pupil engagement are exaggerated.

School X is a large primary school located in South Wales. There are 550 pupils in School X, with 60% of these pupils being eligible for free school meals (FSM), which is well above the local authority average (*Estyn, 2015*). The class observed in school X has 25 pupils who all speak English as their first language. The children observed in School X are between the ages 7 – 9 years old. School Y is a primary school located in South Wales. The class observed in school Y has 28 pupils who all speak English as their first language. The children observed in School Y are between the ages of 9 – 10 years old.

We were interested in pupil engagement and promoting self-esteem as *Webster-Stratton (1999)* suggests encouragement and praise helps to build self-esteem and helps to build a supportive relationship. *Estyn (2019)* identify relationships in schools, between pupils and their peers, and pupils and staff as being a critical factor in regards to pupils' health and well-being (*Clark et al., 2014., McLaughlin and Clarke, 2010*).

This links with one of *Donaldson (2015)*'s four purposes of the new curriculum, healthy confident individuals. One of the six areas of learning and experience is health and well-being, which also links with promoting self-esteem as a whole-school approach (*Donaldson, 2015*). I looked further in to this by reading books, journal articles, government documents and other online material. One source that helped refine our research question and gave us an insight in to behaviour management and ways in which to deal with low level disruptions in the class room was *Sullivan et al., (2014)*'s article: punish them or engage them? Teachers' views of unproductive student behaviours in the classroom. The main aim of the report was to investigate behaviour and the concerns that teachers have, relating to the behaviour of their pupils (*Sullivan et al., 2014*). The results of the research findings suggested that teachers generally struggle to find ways in which to deal with low-level disruption and that behaviour is one of the most common discourses in education (*Ball et al., 2012., Sullivan et al., 2014*).

I looked further in to behaviour disruption by reading about the preschool and kindergarten behaviour scales as this is a well-used design to assess behaviour problems in America (*Burrow et al., 2015., Merrell, 1996*). There is a scale used from 0 – 3, 0 being never and 3 being very often (*Burrow et al, 2015*). However, after extensive research and consideration, we felt that the scale wouldn't benefit our pupils fully, as we were looking for low-level disruption and *Eisenberg and Sulik (2012)* suggest a potential negative factor of the kindergarten scale is that it focuses on extreme behavioural problems and is usually only used for children between the ages of 3 – 6 years. It was essential that we found out what can low-level disruption can be described as to ensure that our research was factual and gave an ethically sound reflection of the children being observed and their behaviour. *Stott (2012)* describes low level disruption as behaviour that is not confrontational, but interrupts teaching and the learning environment. Lack of concentration, fidgeting and persistent chatting are all examples of low-level disruption (*Stott, 2012*). *Krach et al. (2017)* suggests that intervention practices and strategies work best when there are specific guidelines set, so that pupils always know what is expected of them. However, there is limited research stating whether practitioners work collaboratively and follow the guidelines well (*Sullivan et al., 2014., Webster-Stratton, 1999*). The research above helped guide us when creating our own observational research schedule and when discussing what we would do during our research task. *Ames and Baker (1992)* agrees with *Krach et al. (2017)* and believe that collaboration and set guidelines ensure that pupils are fully aware throughout all lessons and have a clear understanding of what behaviour is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

It was essential to carry out research in regards to ways to improve pupil engagement. Research shows that praise is essential to reinforce positive behaviour and to nurture children, however, there's a lot of research that states teachers give between 5 and 10 times more time and attention to pupils displaying bad behaviour than those displaying positive behaviour (*Webster-Stratton, 1999., Martens and Meller, 1990., Wyatt and Hawkins, 1987*). I found this interesting as *Webster-Stratton (1999)* suggests that many children may not have received praise and encouragement in the early years of their life, so for these children, the practitioner may need to supply more consistent support and encouragement to help the child develop a positive self-image (*Webster-Stratton, 1999*). Following on from *Webster-Stratton (1999)*'s views on children not receiving vital praise, thus self-esteem being affected, *Pluckrose (2000)* suggests that many children display negative behaviour as a coping mechanism, as they may feel negative attention is better than no attention. I found this interesting as it coincides with the above statement about pupils receiving more time and

attention when displaying bad behaviour than those displaying positive behaviour (*Webster-Stratton, 1999., Martens and Meller, 1990., Wyatt and Hawkins, 1987*).

One positive reinforcement strategy that we researched thoroughly was the Class Dojo system. Class Dojo is a strategy that is used throughout both School X and School Y and is a strategy that the children are familiar with, which is important as *Burnard (1998)* states that children are more comfortable when in an environment they are familiar with. *Krach et al. (2016)* completed their own research study, evaluating the use of teachers own systems, support charts, and the Class Dojo system (computer based) and found that Class Dojo provided more data, both positive and negative. Class Dojo was seen as the most reliable system that was reviewed (*Krach et al., 2016*). In regards to Class Dojo, many authors agree that it is a well-used piece of equipment, however, there are no peer-reviewed studies completed on the use of Class Dojos (*Hammonds et al.2013., Reinders, 2014., Zurawski 2015*). The fact that there have been no peer-reviewed studies in regards to the use of Class Dojo, this made us want to base our research on Class Dojo even more, as we were both interested to find out if praise, encouragement and the use of Class Dojo positively affect behaviour in our classes.

Dudley (2015) states that one of the most significant ways to improve standards in education is through teaching staff continuing their professional development. *Opfer and Pedder (2011)* suggest that it is extremely difficult to understand what works and doesn't work, in regards to continuing professional development (*Desimone, 2011*). One strategy that meets the criteria, in regards to continuing professional development is lesson studies (*Chichibu, 2014., Dudley, 2015*). The methodology used in this research task is lesson study research, which is a form of action research. The aim of action research is to solve a problem in a setting, through the use of research in a structured approach (*Muijs and Reynolds, 2018*). A lesson study is a model for collaborative classroom professional learning that includes two students working together to develop their own and their partners practice in the classroom (*Peter Dudley, 2015*). *Fernandez and Chokshi (2002)* discuss the long history of lesson studies being used in Japan, initiated by teachers, for teachers. Lesson studies were brought to the UK by Peter Dudley in 2011 as a way to share research and knowledge on ways to improve lessons (*Dudley, 2015*). There are many areas of focus, one being the needs of pupils and ways in which to solve problems, teaching or learning-based, that may be affecting the progress of pupils. A lesson study is a process that many teachers use to ensure that they learn about varied strategies and effective practices that will result in the learning outcomes for children

being improved (*Stepanek et al., 2007*). On the other hand, *Dudley (2015)* states that research suggests lesson studies only work when they are used properly and supported sufficiently. Throughout this process, we ensured we worked together throughout the planning process and supported each other to ensure we stuck to the main aims of the research task.

Throughout this research task, it is essential to use an observation to help us gain information in regards to our research question. An observation can be described as a useful way of recording information from people, objects and events that may occur (*Smidt, 2005., Bold, 2004*). During this research task, it was essential to use an observation to find information to help answer our research question. The observation technique/method of data collection that we used during this research task was a non-participant observation. It is essential that practitioners' presence is inconspicuous when completing a non-participant observation (*Palaogou, 2008*). We worked together to take turns observing in both classrooms. *Devereux (2003)* suggests that a disadvantage of a non-participant observation could be loss of information of the event if it is not logged as soon as possible. A positive of having two people in the classroom (one teaching and one observing) is that the person observing may see events that the teacher could have missed, making the observation more reliable (*Dudley, 2015., Ho and Kane, 2013*). It is important to remember that throughout the observation period, the teacher still has a vital role to play, engaging with the children throughout the lesson and managing all of the different roles throughout the classroom, including behaviour management. It is important that one person leads the teaching and the other acts as the observer (*Dudley, 2015*). We created our own observation schedule, using *Stott (2012)*'s examples of low-level disruption as the basis of what we were looking for throughout (Appendix 1, School X., Appendix 2, School Y).

Reflective practice and reflection are techniques used by professionals to try and help develop their own practice and is another method of data collection (*Hargreaves and Page, 2013., Bulman and Schutz, 2008*). In regards to teaching, reflection is seen as a process that helps teachers 'to learn to learn, and thus to help others' (*Hargreaves and Page, 2013: 5*). It is important to reflect upon the information that we will gain throughout the research task, as *Dewey (1997)* states that we do not learn from doing, but learn from reflecting on an experience, thus developing understanding and improving own practice (*Jasper, 2003*). We will collect data throughout the interview process, from the answers that the children give during the questioning. We will also gain data and knowledge through peer assessment and throughout the observation period during the lesson. The reflective model we have chosen to use was developed and created by Brookfield, *Brookfield's lenses (1995)*. We felt that this would be an effective way to store the data that we will gain throughout the research task, as

we liked the layout of the lenses; the self-lens, student lens, peer lens and literature lens (*Brookfield, 1995*).

Another method of data collection that will be used throughout this research task is an interview process. An interview is a way in which you can gain information from someone during a discussion (*Richards and Munsters, 2012., Smidt, 2005*). We have chosen to complete a semi-structured interview. When planning our questions, it was important to consider what type of questions to ask. We decided to use open questions, closed questions (Appendix 3) and have decided to leave time at the end of the interview for the children to discuss anything that they want to bring up about the lesson/research task. In both School X and School Y, three pupils from each class were chosen as case study pupils. *Krejcie and Morgan (1970)* suggest that a larger sample size helps to reduce error, however we decided to choose three pupils as *Dudley (2015)* states that during a lesson study, there are usually three pupils who are chosen as case pupils (*Dudley, 2013., Chichibu, 2014*).

It is essential when gathering all information and completing our research task that we consider all of the ethical issues that may be present and ensure that we respect participants throughout each project (*Alderson and Morrow, 2011*). *Beauchamp and Childress (2013)* agree that ethics are a way in which to describe key theories and rules that can be used to try and order societies and also personal behaviour. It is important the participants are fully informed of what is involved in the study, what they will be asked to do and why participation is necessary (*BERA, 2018*). Through research and discussion, we considered many areas in which we should be mindful. In regards to any form of research, consent is essential and needs to be given (*David et al., 2001*). Ethical considerations were discussed in the ethics form, relating to the children, the university and considerations for myself as the investigator.

The first lesson was carried out in School X, at 9:30am in a Mathematics lesson on Monday 3rd February. At the start of the lesson, I ensured that I had the consent forms back from the children completing the lesson, as when researching with children under the age of 18, informed consent should be obtained from parents, or those in loco parentis (*UWTSD Research Ethics and integrity code of practice, 2017*). *Dudley (2015)* suggests that children should be chosen during a lesson study either because they're not making enough progress or because pupils' level of engagement/motivation during lessons may be affecting their learning. After finding out this, I wanted to have varied responses from the children, so I chose three pupils from the class, one who is always engaged (Child A), one who is usually

engaged (Child B) and one who has a low-level of engagement (Child C) during a normal lesson. Through doing so, I knew this would give me the opportunity to see different responses from each case pupil during the lesson and to see how praise and encouragement would affect the way in which the pupils behave and engage throughout the Maths Lesson (*Dudley, 2015*).

Before completing any research, we knew that assent needed be received from the children taking part in the research as it is highly desirable that children themselves are actively engaged in the consent process as Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child refers to the right that children should have a say in matters that affect them (*UNICEF, no date*). In both School X and School Y, all participants were informed in regards to all sections of the research, as stated above, the importance of informing participants about what the research task will be looking for and how they will gather the information (*BERA, 2018*).

Child A expressed enthusiasm and willingness at the beginning of the lesson when I explained that each member of the class would be rewarded at the end of the lesson with a Dojo if they displayed positive behaviour. Child A showed the least amount of low-level disruption throughout the lesson (Appendix 1). Child A expressed no discomfort during the observation and also during the interview process. Child A was always willing to answer all questions during the interview and put herself forward to answer questions throughout the lesson. Child A was always first to answer the question during the interview process and this may have had an effect on the answers given by her peers (*Christensen and James, 2008*).

Boehm and Weinberg (1997) state that there is no way of knowing whether the respondent is telling the truth. Child B also expressed eagerness during the introduction of the lesson and was exciting at the thought of earning a Dojo. Child B was eager to answer questions and expressed no concerns during both the observation and the interview process. Following on from this, the participants may be saying what they feel the practitioner wants to hear, thinking that this will please them (*Christensen and James, 2008., Ingleby, 1974., Richards, 1974*).

Child C was more engaged than in a normal lesson, however he did show lack of engagement on times (appendix 1). The answers from Child C in the interview were very promising, as praise and encouragement were given throughout, as well as Class dojos and Child C commented on the fact that he had sung the loudest during the times tables introduction, something that I had praised him for (appendix 3, question 3). Child C was very proud of this, backing up *Webster Stratton (1999)*'s statement that believes self-esteem and the child's well-being is improved when receiving praise and when positive behaviour is acknowledged. I found that overall, low level disruption was lower than usual through

creating a positive, encouraging environments for the children to learn in (Conroy *et al.*, 2009). However, we were cautious of the Hawthorne effect and the way this may have affected the observation, as it is stated that behaviour is modified when children know they are being observed (Adair, 1984., Wickstrom and Bendix, 2000).

The second lesson was carried out in School Y, at 9:30am in a Mathematics lesson on Tuesday 4th February. As I taught the lesson in School X, it was my turn to observe in School Y. Before observing, my fellow practitioner introduced me to the class and pointed out the three children that would be involved in the research task. My fellow practitioner chose three pupils from the class, one who is always engaged (Child D), one who is usually engaged (Child E) and one who has a low-level of engagement (Child F) during a normal lesson. I sat at the back of the class. I was quiet and sat away from all children as Adair (1984) emphasises that when a new observer enters the class, this may affect the environment and the natural behaviour of the children. I wanted my presence in the class to be discreet and for me to be uninvolved, as Palaigou (2008) discuss' the importance of the practitioner stepping outside of their role and not being involved or engaging with the children during a non-participant observation.

It was important that I didn't stereotype whilst observing in school Y and assume the results would be the same as in School X. Dewey (1991) suggests that we are all natural observers and that this may lead to lazy thinking. Bruner (1990) suggests that we make connected assumptions and beliefs through which we then make sense of situations. We, as researchers need to improve our observation skills (Smidt, 2005), and this is something I was cautious of before observing.

Child D was engaged throughout the introduction of the task and when split in to their groups to complete their individual tasks. Child D was the most engaged from the three children that were observed. Child D was always willing to try, putting her hand up to answer questions and helping friends throughout the activity. Child E was the most disruptive out of all the children we observed throughout the two days. Child E often shouted out, swung on his chair and made jokes with his friends to avoid doing his work. My fellow practitioner asked Child E for his answer, allowing waiting time (Ingram and Elliot, 2014) and Child E shrugged his shoulders and gave no answer. Although Child E was disengaged and completed little work, when asked how he thought the lesson went, Child E stated that it was "good. Fun and interesting" (Appendix 3, Question 2). Child F was engaged at times, but showed lack of engagement on several occasions and was easily distracted by peers. Child F spoke to his peer when my fellow researcher discussed the Dojo's that would be given out at the end of the lesson, showing little interest in receiving praise or a Class Dojo. I spoke to my fellow

practitioner after the lesson, and she confirmed that Child F was more engaged during this lesson than he had been in any of her other lessons, which was surprising.

After comparing the data, we had gained from both schools, it was clear that the pupils in School X were more engaged and eager to gain a Class Dojo than the children in School Y. One reason for this may be that the development age and stage of the children were varied, as the children in School X were between 8 and 14 months younger than those in School Y (*King and Kitchener, 1994., Moon, 1999*). *Chua (2011) and Suissa (2013)* suggest that too much praise and effort in making the child feel good may result in children not being driven to succeed. *Webster-Stratton (1999)* and *Green and Hogan (2005)* disagree and suggest that praise is a positive stimulus to promote hard work through use of encouragement and instant feedback.

When interviewed, all children in School X felt that the way Dojo's are given out is fair and all stated that if their peers receive a Dojo, it makes them alter their behaviour (Appendix 3, Questions 6 and 7). In contrast, when asked the same question (Appendix 3, Question 6) all 3 children in School Y said that they would not alter their behaviour just because their peer received praise/encouragement. One reason for this could also be that the Dojo system is inconsistent in School Y, as my fellow researcher confirmed that the Year 6 use it consistently, yet the Year 5 teacher rarely gives out Dojos. This confirms *Krach et al. (2016)*'s statement that suggests that praise needs to be consistent in order to be effective. On the other hand, the Dojo system is used consistently in School X and the children are familiar with the system. *Webster-Stratton (1999)* states that one of the best ways to ensure your pupils are motivated and become successful, is through the consistent promotion of encouragement and praise. The behaviour in School X was overall, positive and the children were engaged for the majority of the lesson, completing a high standard of work.

O'Reilly and Dogra (2017) state that many practitioners find interviewing children daunting, especially if they have little experience of interviewing to gain research. Historically, children were rarely interviewed as they were seen to give incredible examples of their experiences (*Fraser et al., 2014*). However, *O'Reilly and Dogra (2017)* suggest that a change in attitude towards interviewing children was needed and that contemporary research now emphasises the need for children to voice their opinion, in regards to situations that may affect them (*King and Kitchener, 1994., O'Reilly et al., 2013*). *Green and Hogan (2005)* agree and go on to state that through the promotion of child voice, their needs become an essential interest. On the other hand, as stated above by *Boehm and Weinberg (1997)* there is no way to be sure that the answers given by the participants are true, so this makes it difficult to make changes in practice that will positively affect children and their needs (*Clark et al., 2014., White, 2009*).

During the interview process, one question that we asked was “How likely would you be to participate during the lesson without any praise from your teacher? Least likely 1 – 5 very likely” (Appendix 3, question 8). We were surprised with the answers given from School X, as even after I explained the question, the answers given from the children ranged from 4-5. Child A stated that “I wouldn’t mind no praise, you still have to learn” (Appendix 3, Question 8) Both Child B and C agreed with Child A, and stated that they wouldn’t mind having no praise. The children in School Y however, had different responses to the question, with their answers ranging from 1 – 4 (Appendix 3, question 8). Child D answered with “1, as you might be working and others will be chatting” (Appendix 3, question 8). Research interviews that involve children may be challenging, a reason for this may be a difference in age of children being interviewed and the expectations/outcomes of the research (*Christensen and James, 2008., O’Reilly and Dogra, 2017., White, 2009*). We found it interesting that the younger children would be more likely to be involved when receiving no praise and encouragement, as *Ames and Baker (1992)* suggest that younger children are more likely to depend on adult stimulus and encouragement when completing work independently. On the other hand, *Davies (1995)* suggests that children develop an understanding of social justice and what they feel is ‘right’ through experiences they have had. Child D’s answer displayed thought and a complex understanding of why they felt they wouldn’t be involved, as there would be a social injustice if she were to complete work and the rest of the class wouldn’t have to.

In conclusion, the findings of the lessons study confirmed *Krach et al. (2016)*’s views that praise needs to be consistent to be effective in the classroom. Throughout the research task, we looked back on *Webster-Stratton (1999)*’s statement that suggests praise is essential in building a positive relationship with the class and promoting the self-esteem of the pupils we were observing/teaching. We were aware throughout that the pupil’s health and well-being were paramount and the main priority throughout. I feel that *Webster-Stratton (1999)*’s views on self-esteem and praise is accurate, and has helped with the way in which the pupils react to me as their teacher. *Alderson (2017)* supports this, by stating that pupils react positively when respected and treated as an equal. The pupils in School X were well behaved throughout and constantly treat me with the same respect as I give to them.

I feel that through the observation process we were able to see how different children in the class react to praise as a stimulus and how this affected their behaviour. We were aware of the Hawthorne effect and that the children in each class may have been behaving differently whilst being observed (*Adair, 1984., Wickstrom and Bendix, 2000*). Following on from this, we both agreed that it may have been beneficial to have another member of staff from the

school as the non-participant observer, as the children would have been familiar with this person, thus more likely to display their natural behaviour. *Boehm and Weinberg (1997)* agree with this and suggests that observers from outside the school often disrupt the lesson as the children are too interested in the new body in the class and are easily distracted by this (*Fraser et al., 2014*). Overall, throughout the observation process in both School X and School Y, we discussed the behaviour displayed and agreed that the behaviour was pretty similar to the behaviour we would see on a 'normal' day whilst teaching.

Questioning in the interview process helped us to gain more information, in regards to how the children felt about the lesson and gaining their thoughts and feelings on the way in which praise affects them and their behaviour. Overall, the answers given helped to give us a better understanding of how the children felt, but we were cautious of the children wanting to please us, as practitioners (*Boehm and Weinberg, 1997*). We made the interview process as informal as we possibly could and constantly reassured the children that there were no wrong or right answers and were ethically aware, ensuring the children knew they didn't have to answer if they didn't want to, they knew everything was confidential and that they would not be named in the write up of the task (*Alderson and Morrow, 2011., BERA, 2018*).

We felt that the children were ambitious, capable learners throughout the research task, and were taking control of their own learning environment through questioning, answering and providing feedback on issues that affect them and their peers (*Donaldson, 2015., O'Reilly et al., 2013*). To conclude and make a judgement on the research question, 'how can we improve pupils' behaviour during lessons through positive reinforcement, using praise and dojo points?'. I feel that it has been shown that through continuous, consistent use of a specific positive reinforcement strategy, we as practitioners, are able to improve behaviour during lessons (*Webster-Stratton, 1999*). We are aware that there are different strategies and behaviour techniques that suit the needs of different children (*Cunningham, 1993., O'Reilly et al., 2013*). We are also aware that there is a no 'one size fits all' approach in regards to teaching, but feel that with the right amount of positive reinforcement and support in the classroom, it is possible to alter behaviour and to promote children's self-esteem (*Green and Hogan, 2005., McAuley and Rose, 2010., Webster-Stratton, 1999: 29*).

Moving forward, If I were to complete another lesson study, I would include the recommendations listed above and make relevant changes to improve my own practice and to ensure I am continuously developing as a practitioner. If I were to complete lesson study research again, I would complete three lesson studies as *Peter Dudley (2015)* states that

usually there are three research lessons, which are planned together. If we had completed a third lesson, we would have gained more research and had another 3 case pupils to interview and observe. When evidence/research is gathered and answers are similar/overlap, this adds strength to what has been said and becomes a more reliable piece of research (Bond, 2004., Burnard, 1998). One negative to this may be practitioners having enough time to carry out research, but Hargreaves and Page (2013) state that teachers must carry out research to benefit themselves and that in the teaching culture, teachers should be provided opportunities and time to carry out their own research (Desimone, 2011., Grigg, 2010).

I would also change the way I reflect on what I have observed using a different model of reflection. I feel that the information gained using Brookfield (1995)'s four lenses was relevant, however, I feel that I would have gained even more knowledge and a deeper understanding if I had used Gibbs' reflective cycle. Gibbs' reflective cycle has six stages of reflection that relate more towards feelings on the observation, what could have been done and also ways in which to improve, in regards to creating an action plan (Moon, 1999., Schon, 1991). I feel that this would have positively impacted on our research and all areas of development, thus helping me improve overall as a practitioner.

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