

LEVEL 6 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

Student name		Student ID number:	1800895
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Module:	Principles of Pedagogy		
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Lecturer:	Siân Brooks	Internal Verifier:	Siân Brooks
Assignment Title:	‘Describe a learning event which has happened during your recent school experience. Reflect upon what took place, connecting events to theories of learning and teaching. Make recommendations about how you could improve your own practice in the light of this. Produce a poster to illustrate how you would develop the elements of an effective learning environment.’	Word count (or equivalent):	5,000 or equivalent.
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Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 40%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.

Word count 5233

'Describe a learning event which has happened during your classroom observation. Reflect upon what took place, connecting events to theories of learning and teaching. Make recommendations about how you could improve your own practice in the light of this, and produce a digital poster to illustrate how you would use all of this information to develop the elements of an effective learning environment.'

Introduction

In this essay I aim to look at one learning event that was observed during a day of bridging (a day of immersion in a school for a student teacher). I aim to isolate and record that incident and reflect upon the learning theories that describe the actions and behaviour witnessed. I also intend to produce a digital poster to illustrate how I might utilise the information gathered and the subsequent reflections .

The observation school is situated in a residential area near to the centre of a moderately sized British city. The most recent ESTYN report rated the both the school's current performance and prospects for improvement as 'good'. The same report showed an above national average level of free-school meals (FSM), which suggests that the catchment area is may be more socio-economically deprived that the national average. Pupils eligible for FSM have, on average, lower attainment than other pupils throughout their progression in the education system in Wales (Cook. Rutt, and Sims, 2014). The gap in attainment identified at Foundation Phase remains at the end of Key Stage 2 and the gap widens further in secondary education

(Cook, Rutt, and Sims, 2014). It is therefore necessary to be mindful that pupils in the may have greater challenges in accessing knowledge, but that this fact should not bias any observation.

Method

The learning event observation was conducted during a single day's observation of the class. I chose to use a notepad, and record written observations as close to the event as possible and practical. The conversations were recorded shorthand at the time and additional notes were recorded at the end of the lesson. The principle reason for selecting this method of recording was to allow myself to move freely around the learning environment with the minimum of disruption or distraction to the class. As an area of classroom learning, talk is notoriously difficult to study. The three possible ways to record talk (Video, audio and note-taking) all come with inherent benefits and drawbacks. My preferred method of observing would have been discreet video and audio recording, however the head teacher was opposed to audio and visual recordings at the time of the observation. Video and audio recordings are useful but they also risk influencing the intended targets and may miss audio or visual events that are obscured or inaudible. The benefits of note taking are that the observer may be more inconspicuous if properly presented to a class accustomed to external observers and additional adults. Lipman (Lipman, 1996) draws the comparison between observing children and fundamental particles, in that by the process of observation you affect the measurement. The drawbacks of note taking are possible errors in memory and misinterpretations.

Observation

The observation that I recorded, occurred on the Wednesday 26th September 2018. The class had been using a scheme of work based around the Antarctic and its exploration. The class included both year 4 and year 5 pupils. On the day of the observation the class was split in two by a unrelated short trip. The pupils who stayed were asked to use ICT and other resources to research a series of questions (see appendix 1). When the teacher and pupils returned from the trip pupils who had not had the opportunity to research the questions were given 15 minutes to estimate and make their predictions. I made a targeted observation of two pupils, one male and one female, as they addressed the estimation task.

Child 1: Who first set foot on Antarctica?

Child 2: It must be someone famous

Child 1: Yeah, but I don't know who

Child 2: He must be famous because it's really cold and no-one would want to go there

The pupils are aware, that whilst they might not be able to access the true answer, a demonstration of their reasoning will be accepted by the leacher. The pupils record their thoughts as 'Someone famous'.

Child 1: What animals are there in the Antarctic?

Child 2: Polar Bears

Child 1: Penguins

Child 1: What is a blizzard?

Child 2: Is it lots of wind that blows up stuff?

Child 1: But not sand cos there is snow

A child (Child 3) who has researched the questions informs the pair that the answer to the previous question was John Davies.

Child 1: You're Davies is he related to you?

Child 3: No he's not in my family.

Child 2: He's famous the internet only remembers famous people

Vignette 1

After 15 minutes the teacher assembled the pupils and praised them for their efforts on the task. The teacher proceeded to question the class about their answers to the worksheet. The teacher identified students that have estimated answers and directly asked two pairs what they thought. The teacher then asked those students who have researched the question to volunteer answers. The teacher proceeded through the worksheet in this way, alternating between asking for volunteers, targeted pupil questioning and questioning the class as a whole to elicit a group response. Following several questions. The teacher the lesson drew to a close reminding the pupils of the areas that they had covered and informing them of the next stage in the scheme of work. Vignette 2 is an excerpt from my observation of the teacher's questioning.

Vignette 2

Teacher: Which country is closest to Antarctica?

Pupil: South America

Teacher: That is a good answer, but is South America a country?

Class: No

Teacher: What is South America?

Pupil: It's a continent.

Teacher: That's right. So, what is the difference between a country and a continent?

Pupil: A continent has lots of countries in it.

Teacher: That's right. So South America is the closest continent, but which is the closest country

Pupil: Argentina.

Vignette 2

I focused on this learning event as I believe it offers a good exploration of talk in the classroom. Talking is in general viewed as an easy skill, transitory in its nature and so often devalued in comparison to the more permanent nature of the written word (Alexander, 2010). However Alexander (2010) argues that dialogic talk, exploratory talk with no defined endpoint, is a fundamentally important part of the learning process. In a recent study by Alexander, it was shown by randomised control methods that dialogic teaching led to on average, 2 months more progression than in control groups (Cambridge Primary Review Trust, 2018). Hattie (2012) highlights the importance for teachers of allowing students to engage in productive talk and warns that too much teacher talk may impair children by restricting their opportunities to build

upon their own knowledge. Talk must be considered as an integral component of learning and an element that may be easily and effectively modified and adapted to best suit the learning of students. It is for these reasons that I have chosen to explore talk with in the classroom in this essay.

Vignette 1 demonstrates two children using talk to express their understanding in efforts to answer a series of questions. In vignette 2 the teacher utilises talk to question the students, provide feedback and promote learning. By questioning the students the teacher encourages them to expand on their answers beyond the simple answer. This process elevates the observed talk from the 'question, response and feedback' model to deeper thought and questioning. Alexander (2010) describes this model as 'authentic questioning' where in the teacher has not pre-specified a particular answer and therefore may be described as dialogic teaching. Exploratory talk does not introduce new information to the participants, it simply allows users to structure their combined knowledge and draw conclusions and predictions (Mercer and Hodgkinson, 2008) Good questioning can lead to exploratory talk and therefore deeper student thinking and in vignette 2 the teacher allows the students to demonstrate their thinking with his dialogic questioning. Good questioning will increase the opportunities for student to receive feedback, the process of developing thinking by testing ideas and receiving feedback on their thinking thereby allowing the student to learn (Grigg, 2015).

The Sutton Trust and Education Endowment Foundation (2018) report into the cost effectiveness of different interventions found that feedback was the most impactful on child learning. Talk and appropriate questioning are important tools in providing students with feedback. Therefore as a highly effective and cost efficient strategy, talk may be considered to be the most important element in learning.

When comparing vignette 1 to vignette 2 one clear difference is the absence of the teacher in vignette 1. Mercer and Hodgkinson (2008) argue that in talk between peers with no natural hierarchy, causes both parties to negotiate the structure of the dialogue, leading to opportunities for language and thought development. In vignette 1 both children are compelled by the task to use logic and reasoning to arrive at estimates and rationalised guesses to the question sheet. By grouping the students in pairs removing the ability to research the questions, the teacher created opportunities for 'exploratory talk'. Exploratory talk is shared talk, in which two or more contributors display evident reasoning to consider, challenge and critique some idea or statement (Mercer, Wegerif and Dawes, 1999) I believe that the two vignettes provide some evidence of exploratory talk. In vignette 1 both children are active contributors to the conversation in which they both suggest theories based on their previous knowledge. The transcript shows that they both listen to each other's opinions and suggest critiques to arrive at a shared answer. This satisfies much of the criteria for categorising exploratory talk as defined by (Mercer, Wegerif and Dawes. 1999). From this observation the children demonstrate their learning through the process of exploratory talk.

There were a number of limitations on the observation. The most apparent limitation is the length of time allotted to the observation. Due to the PGCE course requirements and limited time at the school, total observation time was reduced to 4 hours. In addition the class was split and half of the students were removed for a few hours to attend a short school trip during which there were limited opportunities for observation. Secondly only one class was observed. To expand on the study it would be prudent to observe other classes within the school and other schools within the area, and other schools in adjacent areas. It would also be advisable to

compare and contrast the learning outcomes with a control class that worked on the same task without providing opportunities for dialogic teaching and exploratory talk. There was also no opportunity to acquire more detailed background information on the children observed. I was unable to review their current educational development, additional learning needs and friendship groups, all of which will have an influence on their attitudes, behaviour and learning.

Learning theories

To analyse the learning event we must first consider the desired outcome. The purpose of teaching is to develop pupils to become healthy successful individuals who are prepared to adapt and thrive in the future (Donaldson, 2015). This may be viewed as a development of the theory of natural selection, whereby as a society we are duty bound to ensure the 'fitness' of the next generation.

There are many theories that describe the process of learning. Grigg (2015) categorises 7 theories which in turn have many sub categories. The relative abundance of learning theories indicates the numerous ways by which learning may be described and the difficulty in proving which theory is in operation. Amongst the oldest of the current theories is that of Behaviourism which is in part attributed to the psychologists Ivan Pavlov 1849 - 1936 and B. F. Skinner 1904 -1990. Behaviourism may be crudely described as a *quid pro quo* exercise in which the action, in this instance learning, is performed at the expectation of a physical or emotional reward. It could be argued that all human activities are exemplifications of behaviourism. Thus it may be

pertinent to use the lens of Behaviourism in conjunction with other learning theories in order to analyse a learning event.

Constructivism is learning theory accredited to the work of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget 1896 -1980. However many theorists now divide Constructivism into two broad camps; Piaget's Constructivism and Vygotsky's Social Constructivism. Piaget and others suggested that learners needed to draw their own conclusions using previous knowledge and experience to interpret and explain a task and the role of the teacher is characterised as a guide rather than an instructor (Grigg, 2015). Piaget theorised that new knowledge was assimilated when it aligned with our existing knowledge structures (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969). Piaget's work was not without its critics who question his assessment of children's learning capabilities (Donaldson, 1978). Another critic was the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896 -1934). Vygotsky was one of the pioneers of 'social constructivism' a theory that recognizes the importance of social interactions on the development of knowledge (Grigg, 2015). Vygotsky's approach led him to characterise thinking as internal process which was evidenced by external processes such as language (Lipman, 1996). Vygotsky also criticised Piaget for not considering the effects of his observation techniques on the children that he observed (Lipman, 1996). This critique reminds us of the importance of being considering the choice of observation technique.

The third main category of learning theories is often labeled as the humanistic approach. Grigg (2015) suggests that humanist theories place the direction of learning firmly in the grasp of the child, where the deterministic approach of other theories is largely abandoned in favor a judgment free exploration of the environment which prioritises self evaluation. Humanistic theories are numerous and by their nature difficult to categorise. Examples of this approach are

schools commonly called Steiner Waldorf schools, based on the philosophies of Rudolf Steiner (1861 -1925). Often at these schools, children are encouraged to focus on their natural environment and more formal reading writing and mathematics are introduced later on than in comparative schools (Gray and Macblain, 2015).

Exploratory talk is evidence of social thinking (Grigg, 2015) and a key component of social constructivism. Therefore the dialogue observed in vignette 1 may be best viewed through the lens of social constructivism. Important considerations in social constructivism highlighted by Gray and Macblain (2015) are; the child's age, culture, external influences and experiences. Whilst social constructivism may not impose a staggered approach as proposed by the cognitive constructivist Piaget. Gray and Macblain (2015) point out that social constructivism describes a general progressive development that follows age and thus may be more visible as children age and their command of language improves.

Fig. 1 demonstrates how the students talk in vignette 1 leads to the development of new meaning via social constructivism. As Child 1 and Child 2 share their ideas and counter arguments each receives feedback and the shared knowledge becomes public. Understanding of the shared knowledge is developed and the conclusions are indicators of learning by social constructivism. The feedback that both children receive from the discussion of their shared knowledge helps to bridge the gap between their initial understanding and the new meaning that is constructed following the discussion (Hattie 2012).

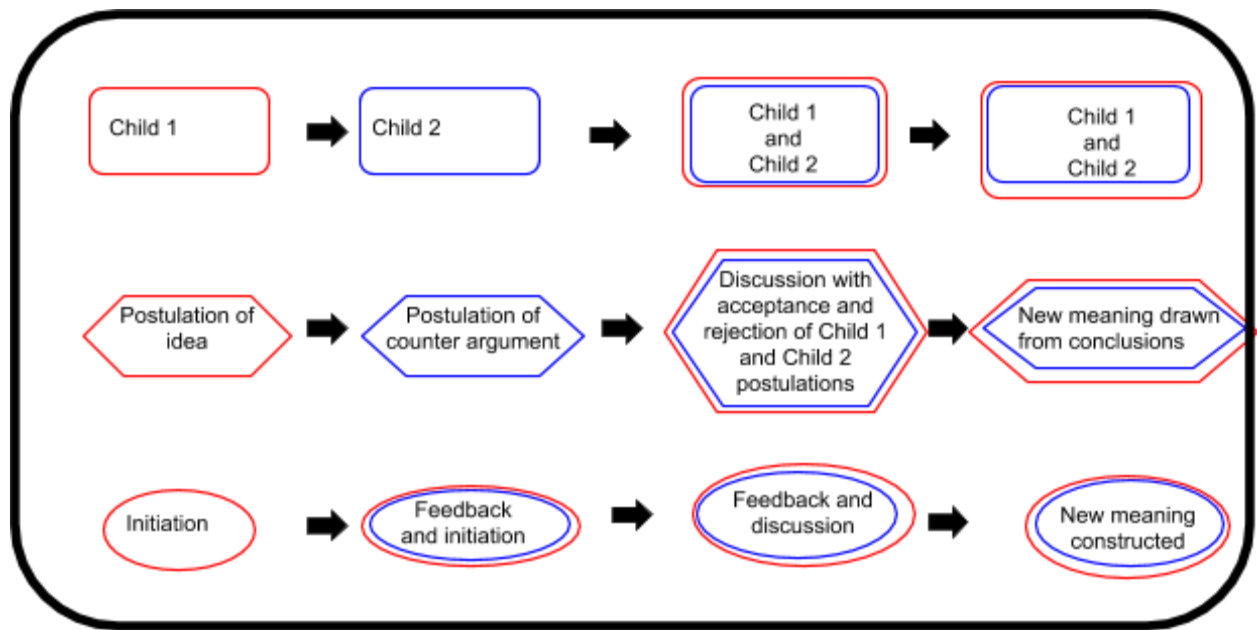
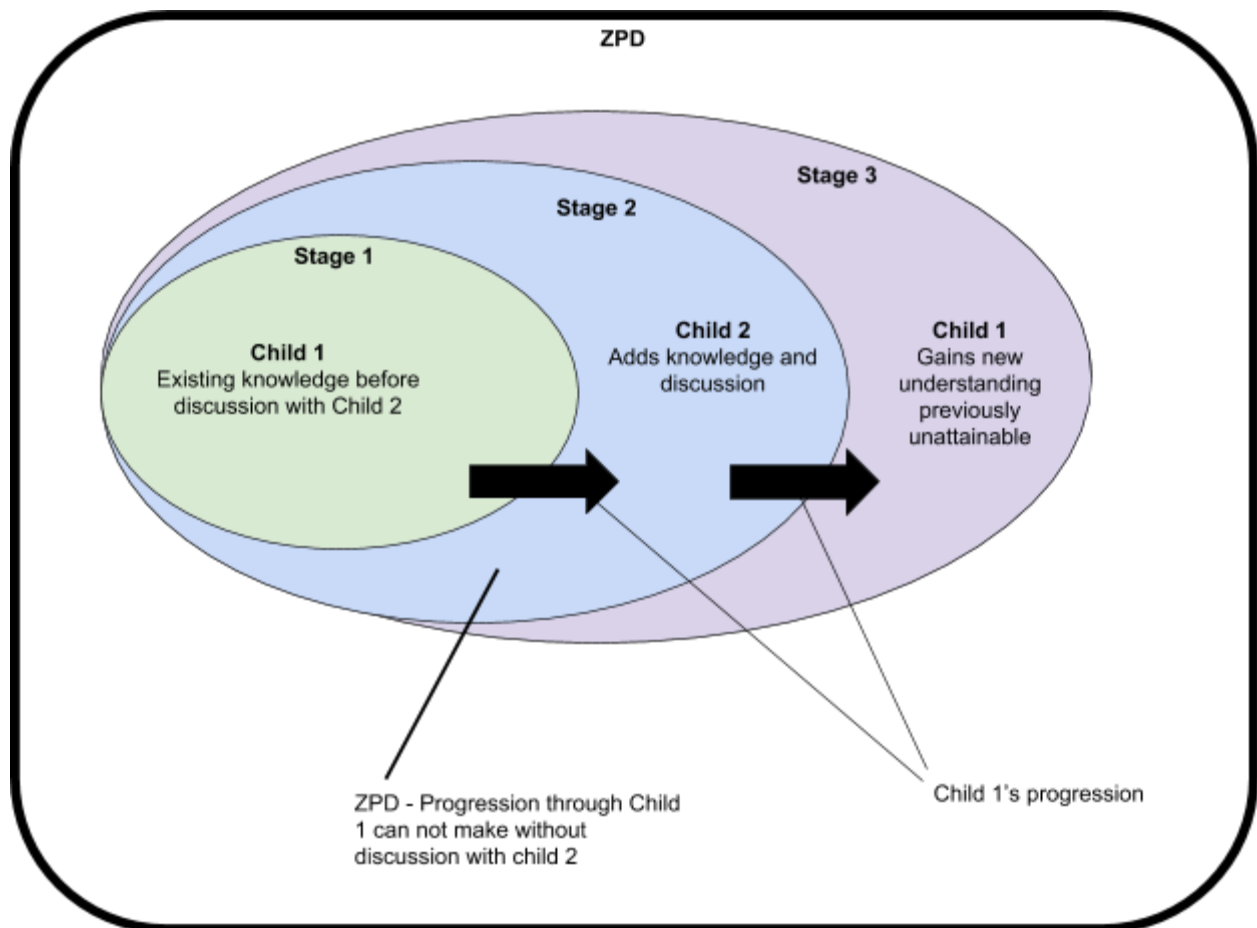


Fig. 1

An alternative social constructivist analysis of the interaction in vignette 1 may be provided through the work of Vygotsky. A key, and often cited component of Vygotsky's work on social constructivism is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). the ZPD is the gulf between the child's individual ability and the child's potential ability which is crossed with assistance from another child or adult (Grigg 2015). This process may be described as 'scaffolding', the agent assists the child in crossing the ZPD and in the process the child connects the new knowledge and skill to their existing knowledge and is less likely to need as much scaffolding in crossing the same or relatable ZPD's in future. In pairing up the children in vignette 1 the teacher offered the children the opportunity to assist each other in crossing the ZPD and develop their individual understanding where individually they would have been unable to arrive at the conclusion. In vignette 2 the teacher uses higher order questioning to assist the class in crossing the ZPD and developing their understanding. In Fig. 2 vignette 1 is analysed using the ZPD model. Child 1 does not begin the interaction with the ability to achieve the understanding in Stage 3 as Child 1

can not cross the ZPD without assistance. In Stage 2 Child 2 introduces his knowledge which enables Child 1 to cross the ZPD and reach Stage 3 wherein previously unattainable understanding may be achieved.



Vygotsky and social constructivism are not without their critics. Gray and Macblain (2015) cite Fox (2001) in their critique of the idea that thought is dependant on language and thus Vygotsky's theories ignore our non-verbalised knowledge. Furthermore they point to possible

errors in translation, an overuse of the ZPD model in social constructivism and the oversight of social experience in favour of social language. When considering learning it is wise to be open minded to all theories. Eacot (2017) warns about the risk of over saturation of the work of any particular educational theorist's work in his assessment of John Hattie's prevalence in the Australian education system to the detriment of other theorists. Such criticism could quite easily be placed on Vygotsky or indeed on the 'Successful Futures' report produced by professor Graham Donaldson, and its implications on the education system in Wales. In cases where one theorist does dominate the educational landscape the stakeholders must continue to test evaluate, feedback and reflect on the implementation of any theory or curriculum.

Conclusions

Hattie (2012) argues the direct relationship between visibility of learning and greater achievement. It is incumbent on the teacher to help the learner understand how their understanding has improved thus their ability to implement that understanding. In the observation the peer learning and teacher's questioning offers the students opportunity to reflect upon their reasoning.

In conclusion this observation and evaluation evidence how a relatively unremarkable event such as working with a partner to estimate and reason answers to a question sheet, and the subsequent teacher driven group questioning may reveal a deeper process of learning. Hattie (2012) writes that when learning is visible there is a higher chance that the pupil will develop further. On reflection I suggest that it is important to think deeply about the appropriate use of

talk and questioning in all aspects of education in order to maximise the learning opportunities for the child. It is important to be perpetually reflective and questioning of all theories, practices and approaches. In consideration of which learning theories to adopt, I believe that the observation that I conducted and the subsequent analysis strongly point to the benefits of a socially constructivist approach. However my review also highlighted the contradictory arguments in the theory of social constructivism and therefore I will endeavour to be critical and reflective of all teaching and learning techniques that I employ in teaching practice. In summation, a social constructivist approach may be a good starting point but it must be reviewed and its suitability for each learning event evaluated.

Ideal Learning Environment

I have created a digital poster to illustrate an 'Ideal Learning Environment' as dictated by the following commentary, see Appendix 2.

The first question to address when considering a learning environment is to define what characteristics both physical and emotional, combine to construct that environment. Gray and MacBlain define learning as 'the permanent acquisition of knowledge or a skill' (Gray and MacBlain, 2015, p. 215). Therefore any environment in the world has the potential to be considered as a learning environment. The most commonly considered learning environment is the school classroom and as such I have used that location as the model learning environment in this exercise, whilst being mindful that it is by no means the only learning environment

available, and that suggestions for this classroom learning environment may function outside of it.

The aim of any learning environment must be to promote the greatest possible development of the students and teachers whilst satisfying the ethical and statutory requirements. A useful starting point for considering the needs and requirements of students is the often cited Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Gobin et al, 2012). Maslow's theory is a rudimentary breakdown of a person's requirements that motivate their behaviour. Maslow's theory states that the requirements of each stage must be satisfied in order to progress to the next and higher stage (Maslow, 1943) (see Fig. 3).

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs		
Stage 1	Physiological needs	Breath, Sleep, Eat, Drink
Stage 2	Safety	Shelter, Protection
Stage 3	Relationships, love and belonging	Desire to form attachments with family friends, and groups
Stage 4	Esteem	Self confidence and respect from society and peers
Stage 5	Self-actualisation	Feelings of freedom, creativity and reflection.

Fig. 3

Whilst Maslow's Hierarchy may be a blunt instrument it does suggest a structure by which an effective learning environment could be built. Any Ideal learning environment should aim to empower it's students and provide them with the tools and resources to achieve self

actualisation. Ensuring that learners have their more basic requirements met will provide them the opportunity to learn at their best. When considering the learning environment it is also important to refer to the government mandated curriculum. In Wales the future curriculum will be based upon the Successful Futures report (Donaldson, 2015), and is due for implementation in 2022. The future curriculum whilst still in development is committed to several ideals. At the core of the Successful Futures curriculum are the 4 key purposes (Fig. 4), and a more connected curriculum consisting of 6 areas of learning and experience (Fig. 5). Therefore an ideal learning environment should be equipped to accommodate in the 6 areas of learning and experience and the 4 purposes of the curriculum.

Successful Futures - proposed 4 key purposes of the curriculum	
1.	Develop ambitious, capable learners
2.	Develop healthy, confident individuals
3.	Develop enterprising, creative contributors
4.	Develop ethical, informed citizens

Fig. 4

	Successful futures - 6 proposed areas of learning and experience
1.	Expressive arts Area of Learning and Experience
2.	Health and well-being Area of Learning and Experience
3.	Humanities Area of Learning and Experience
4.	Languages, literacy and communication Area of Learning and Experience
5.	Mathematics and numeracy Area of Learning and Experience
6.	Science and technology Area of Learning and Experience

Fig. 5

Implementation

If we first consider Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, physical requirements such as food and drink can be viewed as essential for learning to take place. I propose to create an area in which students are offered the opportunity to eat a healthy breakfast in the classroom before the school day starts. Many schools in Wales offer a breakfast club (a before school club enabling children to have breakfast from the canteen) however I propose opening the classroom as an alternative space for the students. The benefits of offering a school breakfast were highlighted by Frisvold (2015). His review of the USA's School Breakfast Programme found a child attending a school where a nutritious breakfast was offered for 1 year improved his achievement in mathematics by 8% and that frequent exposure to a nutritious breakfast may lead to meaningful academic success. Another benefit of offering breakfast at school was highlighted by Grigg (2015) who lists breakfast clubs as one of the most effective strategies for increasing school attendance. The inherent drawbacks of the breakfast club within the classroom are cost, dietary requirements, food preparation and health and safety considerations, and staffing. Additionally there may be social stigmatism about receiving free breakfasts which would need to be addressed. A BBC news report (Lewis, 2018) based on Government data (Welsh Assembly Government 2018) highlighted concerns about perceptions of those claiming free school meals. Despite the challenges of offering free school breakfasts the evidence supports the programme's efficacy and it would likely contribute to a more successful learning environment

A recent review of classroom design (Imms and Byers, 2017) drew attention to the lack of understanding of design impact on students and teachers due to the complexity of the topic.

The researchers commonly found that the more flexible and dynamic the environment the more impactful the positive effect on the students and teachers. The study suggests that providing more areas for active learning and social learning typically yielded greater performance. Suggestions to improve the impact of classroom design included covered outdoor areas, nooks and alternative seating. Drawing on these conclusions I propose to create outdoor spaces and distinct areas designed and created with students to provide a choice in the type of physical environment in which they undertake certain tasks examples of which are listed in Fig. 6.

Physical Environment	Features
Outdoor space	Covered, heated
Nook 1	Flexible seating e.g bean bags, wobble cushions, balance balls
Nook 2	Adjustable chairs and tables

Fig. 6

Seating can be vitally important in a learning environment for behaviour management, group exercises and wellbeing. Teachers need to become more conscious about seating arrangements as an important part of classroom management (Gremmen et al, 2016) this study of 50 teachers found that appropriately considered seating could reduce teacher stress and improve academic behaviour. In a study of classroom behaviour Bicard (2012) found that classroom seating was one of the most cost-effective and simplest behaviour management techniques. In some cases seating changes were found to eradicate disruptive behaviour eliminating the need for interventions. They observed that when students choose their seating behaviour did not necessarily improve however when the teacher selected seating there tended to be fewer occurrences of disruption. When considering rows versus grouped seating, the

study found rows isolated disruptive behaviour. Whilst the study was limited to the number of schools observers and focused on behaviour and less on achievement, it does provide some useful considerations when planning seating formations and allocations.

An alternative study (van den Berg and Cillessen, 2015) looked at the effect of seating on children's social interactions. When teachers control the seating pattern they also determine which children are placed in close proximity and thus each child's social environment. Van den Berg suggests that a child might derive their social standing and worth from that seating pattern with the more popular children being placed centrally and or in closer proximity to amenities or the teacher. The children may also base their worth upon perceptions of the children with whom they are placed. This study highlights the deeper thoughts and considerations that must accompany a seating strategy. The study also recognised that seating in groups allowed more opportunities to create social bonds and each child has more opportunities to like and be liked.

When considering the research it is clear that there is no 'one size fits all' model for classroom seating. Therefore I conclude that a sensible learning environment strategy would be to provide the classroom with a malleable seating structure. Tables would be fitted with lockable rollers to allow them to move, combine and separate enabling grouping of students. Many educators suggest base groups of 3 to 4 pupils, thus allowing social interaction for social constructivism whilst allowing behaviour to be managed creating an environment where learning was supported. I suggest that student groupings should be frequently evaluated and students given the opportunity to interact with all of their classmates. Van den Berg and Cillessen (2015) considered that the teacher played an important role in student worth, and thus the seating arrangement should allow the teacher to move freely around the classroom to avoid the appearance of favouritism.

The first visual physical element that commonly strikes any classroom visitor is the classroom's walls. Reflecting on my own experiences as a child, upon entering a new classroom I often felt overawed by the daunting displays that bore little connection to my experiences or learning. I therefore feel it is advisable to consider the displays and decoration of a classroom's walls. Fisher, Godwin, and Seltman, (2014) support this view citing the body of evidence linking focussed attention to performance and highlighting that children are often surrounded by displays not relevant to the learning. Furthermore Fisher found that children were less distracted, more focused and achieve more when displays were removed. One only has to observe an engrossed child playing with a blank cardboard box to understand that decoration and form are not always required for a child's engagement.

Milo-Shussman (2017) concludes that there can be no perfect recipe to dictate classroom displays and decoration, and likens the class teacher to the head baker, ultimately responsible for deciding what is placed on the walls. Any teacher should therefore be reflective of their own thoughts, biases and motivations when considering classroom design. To this end Milo-Shussman (2017) makes several recommendations listed in the Fig. 7.

Recommendation	Purpose
Remove irrelevant content	Provide learners with useful and applicable content and reduce distractions.
Titles and headings should be legible from anywhere in the classroom	Aid children to identify material that may be useful to their learning at any point.
Displays should be positioned in	Be aware that whilst it may be tempting to use the

regard to children's heights	entire wall space - in order to use the information children must be able to comfortably access it.
Consider use of contrast in text and background	Ensure that the content is legible, clear and usable.
Beware of visual overload	Be aware that too much visual noise may impair relevant information from being accessed.
Each display should be considered as an individual composition and in turn each wall and all of the walls.	Consider each display's intended effects individually, as a group and as a whole to make the most efficient use of wall displays.

Fig. 7

Considering these suggestions I propose that any ideal learning environment must review its wall displays and consider their construction and purpose. Furthermore in my ideal environment children have a strong choice in what displays are included, where they are placed and when they are no longer relevant. I suggest providing low contrast cloth coverings to enable students and teachers to select and reveal appropriate wall displays as dictated by the requirements of the learner at each lesson.

Conclusion

In conclusion when considering an ideal learning environment it becomes apparent that there are near infinite possibilities, however at the one core focus must be on the development and well-being of the class as a whole and the individual learners. In their review of school belonging (Demanet, Van Houtte and Mieke, 2012) found that generally the more cohesive the school environment the greater the achievement. Good cohesion was built on teacher support and overall school belonging and required student-student attachment and student-teacher attachment. They highlighted that peer bonding was irrelevant in respect to achievement if there

was little bonding with the teacher. Therefore it is essential that the teacher and pupils establish a secure and trusting relationship. I suggest that a good learning environment must foster such a relationship, and that the proposals in this essay are valuable considerations in developing such an environment.

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Appendix 1 - Worksheet used in the targeted observation.

Antarctica
Things to find out!



- Who first set foot on Antarctica?
- List any animals that are found on or near Antarctica.
- How cold can Antarctica get?
- What is a blizzard?
- When did the first person set foot on Antarctica?
(How many years ago was this).
- What country first discovered Antarctica?
- What is the highest point on Antarctica?
- What is the closest country to Antarctica?
- What is the name of the ocean that surrounds Antarctica?
- What is the area of Antarctica?

Appendix 2 - Ideal Learning Environment poster

