

ECPP7001

Do mini plenaries improve pupil involvement
during an independent activity in a key stage 2
class?

1700266

Word Count - 5966

Student Self Evaluation Form

This section repeats in brief the common assessment criteria detailed on previous pages. The *extent* to which these are demonstrated by you determines your mark. Using these criteria, tick the box that best indicates the level of achievement you feel you have achieved with regard to each of them.

Common Assessment Criteria Applied	REFER		D	C	B	A
	OUTRIGHT FAIL	UNSATISFACTORY	SATISFACTORY	GOOD	VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT
1. Subject Knowledge and Understanding (which includes using research-informed literature and knowledge and understanding of the subject)	☐	☐	☐	☐	X	☐
2. Intellectual Skills (Analysis)	☐	☐	☐	X	☐	☐
3. Pedagogic and Professional Applications (Practical Application and Deployment)	☐	☐	☐	X	☐	☐
4. Key Transferable Skills	☐	☐	☐	X	☐	☐

PLEASE COMMENT ON AREAS IN WHICH YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE PERFORMED WELL	PLEASE COMMENT ON AREAS YOU FEEL THAT YOU NEED TO DEVELOP
I feel like the research behind this project worked well. The observations and the tool used allowed us to gather useful information on the involvement levels. I enjoyed conducting the focus group with the children. It was a useful insight into their thoughts on the lessons.	It has been over 11 years since I carried out any kind of academic research, so I had to refresh the way in which a research report is written.

Student's Name	Jenna Tucker 1700266	Date	14.04.18
Student's Signature			

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Aim of the research

The aim of the current research was the result of a recent experience in a key stage 2 classroom. During this teaching practice placement, the pupils in the class found it difficult to maintain their concentration and remain on task for the entirety of the independent activity in a lesson. This resulted in talking, disruption and a lot of interruptions to quiet them down and bring them back on task. I concluded that this way of working was not beneficial to me or the pupils and that they could not be working to their full abilities. The notion of focus and engagement is of vital importance to children to ensure effective learning therefore, I made it an essential target for development. To move forward and improve this issue before my next teaching placement, the purpose of this research was to improve focus during an independent lesson activity.

Research context

After sharing this experience of my teaching placement with my research partner she explained that she had encountered a very similar experience. That class had also struggled with concentration and remaining on task for the duration of a lesson. We agreed that due to this similar issue, the aim of our research activity would be improving focus during a lesson. We both agreed that it was essential for us to improve this issue before we embarked on our next teaching practice placement.

The next step was selecting a pedagogical technique to use to improve concentration levels. During our placements we had both raised the issue of lack of focus during lessons with our experienced university mentors. The technique that was suggested to us independently was the use of mini-plenaries. We concluded that as mini-plenaries offer the opportunity to pause during a lesson to check progress and understanding, then this might be an effective tool to increase concentration levels.

The research took place in two large primary schools, one based in Swansea and one based in Llanelli. The School based in Swansea was a large school based in an urban area. The research activity took place in a year 3/4 class with 31 children. The school in Llanelli was a large school in a deprived area. The research activity took place in a year 4 class with 36 children.

Literature review

Laevers et al (2005; P.10) argue that “a child who is involved is completely absorbed by the activity”. They define involvement as the degree to which pupils are working to their full ability. Therefore, children who are operating at high levels of involvement will show qualities including focus, engagement and interest. Due to these qualities involvement is the state that leads to deep level learning. This is supported by Donaldson (2015) who states that sustained effort is vital for effective learning and this leads to higher attainment.

Deep level learning concerns learning the underlying meaning of information not just the substance (Laird et al, 2005). It also involves taking information learned in one situation and transferring it to another. Deep level learning is crucial as it is linked with higher academic attainment and it increases the ability of retaining information and integrating and transferring it in a different circumstance (Ramsden, 2003, cited by Laird et al, 2005). In addition, Tagg, 2003 (cited in Laird et al, 2005) argues that deep level learning is related to a more enjoyable learning event compared with surface level learning which tends to be less rewarding. Although Hattie (2009) disagrees and from his work on visible learning argues that surface level learning is not bad and deep level learning good. There needs to be the correct balance between the two as surface level leads to deep level and combined they result in a set of knowledge and understanding.

In contrast low levels of involvement in pupils is cause for concern as it can cause stagnation in development. Pupils with low levels of involvement show qualities including boredom and frustration with an activity. Laevers et al (2005) argue that pupils can only gain involvement when they are being challenged, so tasks are not too easy or too hard. This is in line with the Constructivism Theory of learning and specifically Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development. This states that when a pupil works below the Zone of Proximal Development they learn nothing new and if they work above it the work will be beyond their current abilities.

All this research highlights the importance of a child's involvement in a lesson and the impact it has on learning. Although there is no research that doubts the significance of pupil involvement during a lesson, other researchers have reported

other means of maintaining focus. Bunce, Flens and Neiles (2010) showed that as a lesson progresses, student concentration descends in ever decreasing cycles. To tackle this, they suggest changing the pedagogical techniques used within a class period to help engage students. Johnstone and Percival (1976) reinforce this by stating that lessons should be scattered with different teaching techniques and breaks to maintain student focus.

The Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence for Education (CUREE) (2010) looked at the characteristics of high quality teaching. This report emphasises the importance of plenaries and argues that the quality of teaching was better and pupil responses were higher quality in lessons where the teacher used a plenary. This is supported by Hattie (2009) who maintains that plenaries are an essential part of a lesson as they offer the opportunity to reflect and consolidate learning. A plenary is where a teacher reviews the learning objectives of the lesson to consolidate learning. During a plenary the teacher can ask questions, gauge understanding and move the learning forward. A plenary can take place at the end of a lesson or at points throughout the lesson, this is called a mini-plenary. Therefore, a mini-plenary involves a teacher pausing the lesson at certain intervals to address the whole class to check understanding, to question and to check progress. The lesson is then resumed, and pupils carry on with their task.

Joyce-Gibbons (2016) argue that mini-plenaries are a way of scaffolding an activity. Scaffolding is part of the Social Constructivism Theory of learning which states that an adult supports (scaffolds) the child's learning. This was very similar to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and the terms are often used interchangeably. Thus, a teacher can use a mini-plenary to evaluate pupils' work and understanding and steer it, so it aligns better with the solution to the activity (O'Connor and Michaels, 1993). Joyce-Gibbons (2016) continue and state that mini-plenaries may have different benefits to different pupils. For some it may have the procedural benefit of allowing them to refocus, for others it may have a cognitive benefit, in such that it develops their reasoning and for others it may be a vicarious benefit. In contrast for some pupils it may be a disruption that interrupts a successful working environment.

Mini-plenaries could be a form of dialogic teaching (Alexander, 2007). Dialogic teaching is where the teacher uses the power of talk to challenge and extend pupils' thinking to improve their learning. It can help a teacher evaluate pupils' needs to

assess their requirements and develop their next steps. The Education Endowment Foundation's Toolkit (2018) reported a positive relationship between attainment and dialogic teaching. They showed that the use of dialogic teaching in lessons can add around two months additional progress for pupils. Overall, research shows mini-plenaries as a widely used pedagogical technique but there is not yet the level of research available as with other techniques. Therefore, more research is required on mini-plenaries to show the impact it can have on teaching and learning.

All this research and literature helped to refine the research question to 'Do mini-plenaries improve pupil involvement during an independent activity in a key stage 2 class?'

Lesson Study design

The methodology used is Lesson study. Lesson study is a form of action research that originated in Japan. Dudley (2013) argues that lesson study is a model of professional development that has a positive impact on teaching and learning. It was introduced in the UK in 2001 by Peter Dudley. The lesson study methodology is that a small group or a pair of teachers work together to develop a specific pedagogical approach within the classroom. This is achieved through collaboratively planning, teaching, observing and analysing teaching and learning over a cycle of research lessons, with the aim of looking at the effects of and refining the chosen pedagogical approach. Three case pupils are selected and their responses to the pedagogical approach are recorded during the research lessons. They are also interviewed to gather their opinions of the research lesson. The outcomes and findings from the lesson study can be shared to improve practice knowledge. Lesson study has had a rapid growth over the last 10 years as hundreds of schools have implemented this technique. However, Lewis et al (2006) claim that this rapid increase in the use of lesson study has occurred without a full understanding of its process or nature. Therefore, for this technique to last and not to fall into the trap of other educational craze then more research is required. This lesson study method was used in this research with two student teachers across two primary schools. Three specific focus children were chosen, a high, mid and low attaining. This selection was done in collaboration with the class teachers.

The methods of data collection used within this research were observation and focus group. Firstly, non-participant observation was used to collect the data. During the research activity one partner taught the pupils in their normal lesson and the other research partner acted as the non-participant observer. This involved watching the lesson and the three specific focus children, with their knowledge and consent, without taking part in the lesson. For the second lesson, the roles then reversed. This method of observation was chosen as the researcher does not interfere with the behaviour within the lesson, it is easy to record data and it allows the researcher to be completely focussed on observing the lesson. However, one of the main disadvantages of using observations is that participants may change their behaviour because they know they are being watched. This is called the Hawthorne Effect and is an inevitable bias that will need to be taken into consideration when analysing findings (McCambridge et al, 2014). The non-participant observations were recorded using the Leuven Scale for Involvement (Laevers et al, 2005). The scale was amended for the research activity to simplify the descriptions of the different levels. This made it easier to determine levels during the observations. This scale uses a five-point rating scale to measure involvement within a specific task or activity. Figure 1 shows the five-point rating scale. This scale was chosen in this research activity because it's a well-researched scale that has been used widely in educational research across the world, it puts the child at the centre of the observation and most importantly it allows an informed decision to be made on whether each of the focus children are involved or working to their full capabilities during an activity. A pilot study was carried out to ensure consistency with the Leuven Scale for Involvement. A video of pupils' completing a task from 'Teachers TV' was viewed by both research partners and three pupils' involvement ratings were taken during intervals through the video. Both sets of ratings were compared and were the same. Due to this no changes were made to the observation schedule (Appendix 1).

Figure 1: The Leuven Scale for Involvement

<i>The Involvement Scale</i>	<i>A Description of the Level</i>
1	Completely uninvolved. Sometimes young children walk away, stare into space or do not interact with the people or play materials.
2	Only involved for brief periods. They may be wandering around aimlessly. Sometimes they do things that do not challenge them, so they are not learning anything new.
3	Involved some of the time but what they are doing is not very important to them. If you ask them to do something different, they will easily switch to a different activity.
4	Involved in something they have chosen, which is important to them. They are not easily distracted yet there are moments when they need a parent's or worker's interest to help keep them involved. (A child can be involved by watching or thinking intently - the eyes show brightness and the body language demonstrates their involvement).
5	Deeply involved. They know what they want or need to do. They can choose, continue to be absorbed for long periods and show most of the signs of involvement.

The final method for data collection was a focus group. After the research lessons the three specific focus children took part in a focus group to gather their opinions on the lesson. The focus group questions centred around obtaining general comments on the lesson, any improvements that could be made and specific thoughts and views on the mini plenaries (Appendix 2). The information obtained from the first focus group identified the improvements that needed to be made to the second lesson. A focus group was chosen as it is an effective method to gain pupil experiences of a specific pedagogical method and it can add to and complement statistical information from other processes (Breen, 2004). Yet, the use of focus group is not without any weaknesses. Cohen and Manion (2007) state that data from focus groups can be difficult to analyse, the dynamic of the group can make it difficult for some participants to take part and it requires skilful facilitation. The focus group sample of three pupils were chosen, one high, mid and one low attaining pupil, based on information obtained on lesson study methodology. Dudley (2014) states that three case study pupils should be used per class during lesson study. He also argues that these pupils should represent different groups of learners within the

class. Therefore, one making good progress, one making average progress and one making below average progress across the curriculum.

After each lesson a reflection was produced to analyse and evaluate the lesson. Reflection within the teaching profession is widely supported, is seen as a proactive approach to professional development and is strongly linked to effective teaching (Welsh Government, 2015). Moreover, reflection is known to complement action research (Welsh Government, 2015). The reflection was recorded using the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) form (Appendix 3). This method of reflection was selected as this was the method most familiar as it was used during recent teaching placements. Furthermore, this method uses a combination of different prominent reflection models including Gibbs' (1988) Reflective Cycle and Rolfe et al's (2001) Reflective Model.

The data obtained from the focus groups and lesson reflections were qualitative. The discussion from the focus group were audio recorded and the main points were noted (Appendix 4). This data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), whereby you analyse, identify and report themes within data. This technique was chosen because detailed technological and theoretical knowledge is not required as it is with other approaches. Therefore, it is more suited for someone with less experience (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Qualitative data has the benefit of allowing for contradictions and ambiguity which do occur in natural environments (Denscombe, 2010).

Ethical Considerations

An ethics form was completed which outlined all the ethical considerations that would be considered. This included:

- Ensuring that no child was treated differently if they chose not to be involved in the research activity. This was communicated to the children.
- During the focus group activity, it was emphasised to the children involved that they can withdraw or leave at any time.
- Assent was obtained from all pupils involved (Appendix 5) and parental consent was obtained from parents (Appendix 6)
- Legal guidelines for working with children were followed

- The guiding principle was the well-being of the children. The school's safeguarding policy was followed.
- Any information and personal data that have been recorded have been handled sensitively and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Information has been stored on a password protected cloud storage.
- The research methods that have been chosen are fit for purpose and are methods that are routinely used within educational research.
- The children were made to feel at ease throughout the lesson and during the focus group
- The focus group took place within a classroom that is familiar to the children, the classroom has a window and is accessible.
- No incentives were offered therefore there was no pressure on the children to take part
- The questions asked during the focus group did not cause any distress to the children. They were open questions and contained no leading questions that could lead to bias. Children were encouraged to answer honestly.

Lesson study and analysis

Lesson one

The aim of both lessons was to create a poem using the key features using the poetry patience method. This is where an existing poem is taken, and the words are jumbled up. The pupils must produce their own poem using the words from the original poem. The lesson plan can be found in Appendix 7. During the first lesson, with a year 4 class, the pupils were shown an Easter poem and from that, as a class, they highlighted the key features of a poem. These features were written on the white board for pupils to use as the success criteria when creating their own poem.

During the first lesson all pupils achieved the learning outcome of creating a poem using key features. All pupils engaged with the task and produced a range of different poems which contained the key features including rhyming, adjectives, alliteration and personification. Due to the nature of the task and the challenge of using allocated words there was a high level of thinking within the lesson. This is shown through the work that was produced. The poems produced by the children

highlighted that they had thought hard about which words to use in their sentences and bringing in all the key features. Levels of involvement during the lesson remained at higher levels. The three target children who were being observed had an average involvement level of 4 throughout the lesson (Appendix 8). According to Laevers et al (2005) level 4 is a high level of involvement and will lead to deeper level learning.

Immediately following the lesson, a focus group was carried out with the three target children. During the discussion the children expressed their opinions of the lesson and shared how they thought the lesson could be improved. The suggestions included firstly, making the writing of the poetry words bigger and bolder so they were easier to read. Secondly, it was suggested that rather than writing the words down and crossing out which words had been used, to cut and stick the words into a poem. One child stated that it was difficult to keep track of the words he had used when crossing out. Additionally, he felt that it was difficult to read a sheet that had a lot of scribbling on. Thirdly, they found some of the words difficult therefore, it would have been helpful to run through the difficult words at the start to aid understanding. Finally, it was suggested that more connective words be added to the poetry words as those were the words that they used most often. All of these improvements were implemented into the second lesson.

When the discussion turned to the mini plenaries throughout the lesson the target children shared that they found them useful. They stated that they were useful to know how much work they should have completed at that point, to remind what they should include and to share ideas on what could be used for the different key features. When asked about the frequency of the mini plenaries the children felt as if they had around the right amount for the lesson. Thus, it was decided that for the second lesson the mini plenaries would be kept at the 10-minute intervals. The children did express the usefulness of timings. During the final mini plenary, the pupils were notified how long was left of the lesson. They maintained that this was valuable to know because it showed them how fast they would have to work to complete the task. They proposed that timings should be an added detail of the mini plenaries. Consequently, it was decided that the timings of the lesson would be added to the mini plenaries for the second lesson.

The Leuven Scale of Involvement (Laevens et al, 2005) was an effective method of observing focus during the lesson. It was simple to use and effortless to record on. This ensured that all the concentration was on observing the children. The descriptions of the different levels of involvement were straightforward and the behaviours were simple to look out for. Hence, it was decided that no changes were to be made to the observation schedule.

Overall, the lesson was a positive experience. This was due to the pupils all achieving the learning outcome, all producing a poem independently and largely the involvement levels remaining at high levels throughout. This would suggest that the mini plenaries had a positive impact on the lesson and its outcomes.

Lesson two

The second lesson was the same poetry lesson as the first lesson but with the amendments based on the suggestions from the pupils in the first focus group. Hence, the poetry word sheets were printing in bold and in a bigger font, more time was spend going over unfamiliar words on the sheet, more connectives were added to the word sheet and instead of writing their poems the pupils cut out and stuck the words down. All the other elements of the lesson remained the same. The only difference being that this lesson took place in a year 3/4 class.

Levels of involvement during the lesson also remained at higher levels. The three target children who were being observed had an average involvement level of 4 throughout the lesson (Appendix 9). As aforementioned higher levels of involvement during a lesson (levels 4 and 5) are recommended. Laevens et al (2005) argue that to ensure optimal learning within a lesson, pupils need to be operating at levels 4 and 5. Therefore, this would suggest that during this lesson the pupils were highly engaged and as a consequence they were learning at an ideal level. This was shown in the work that was produced from this lesson and in that all pupils achieved the learning outcome. It was also noticed that lower attaining children who sometimes struggle with high volumes of writing excelled at this task. They produced lengthy poems with all the relevant features. This could be the result of the words being provided for them and them not having to write down the poems.

Following the lesson, the three target children took part in a focus group to discuss their thoughts and opinions on the lesson. During the discussion the children

expressed that overall, they enjoyed the lesson and felt that they had learned a lot about poetry. They conversed over the improvements that could be made to the lesson which included firstly adding more determiner words (the, a, this) to the word sheet as these were the words they used first and struggled when they ran out. Secondly, instead of cutting and sticking the words to just write them down. This contrasts with what the first lesson suggested. From an observer's point of view the pupils appeared more engaged in the second lesson due to the practical nature of cutting and sticking. The level of involvement scores supports this view as the average level throughout the first lesson was 3.5 and 3.8 in the second lesson.

When asked about the mini plenaries the children in the focus group stated that they had been helpful. One girl said that having the timings within the mini plenaries helped keep her on track because without the timings she would work at a slower pace because she would think she had plenty of time to complete the task. Furthermore, the children revealed that the intervals of the mini plenaries had felt about right as it reminded them of what criteria they needed to include and helped them if they were struggling. Thus, it would seem that 10-minute intervals for mini plenaries work well within lessons.

A personal reflection on this lesson (Appendix 10) highlighted the positive impact of the mini plenaries on the lesson. The mini plenaries offered the opportunity to check pupil progress and also to address one success criteria at each interval. This provided a recap for the pupils as well as a chance to address any misconceptions. During the lesson the feeling was that the children were engaged with the task and were challenged enough. The only negative reported about the lesson was the amount of work produced by the pupils. Even though the work that was produced was of a high standard it was felt that it would have been beneficial for the pupils to have finished their poems. Due to the nature of the task where pupils were cutting and sticking, this was time consuming. Therefore, it was concluded that if this task were to be repeated in the future the pupils should receive adequate time to complete the task.

The information obtained in the second lesson further supports the findings from the first lesson that the mini plenaries seemed to have a positive effect on pupils' involvement levels during the main activity of the lesson. During both lessons the involvement levels of the target pupils ranged around 3-5 with the average of both

lessons being 4. This is regarded as a high level of involvement. This experience would suggest that mini plenaries are a useful tool for teachers to use to keep children involved throughout the lesson. It was encouraging that the amount of improvements expressed from the first lesson to the second lesson decreased. This suggests that the lesson had improved, and this is supported by the average involvement levels increasing slightly in the second lesson.

Discussion

The information from the two lessons showed that overall levels involvement were high with an average of 4. The findings also revealed that both lessons followed the same pattern with involvement levels. Firstly, in both lessons the levels would start of high which suggests that pupils were focussed on the lesson directly following the introduction. Next, during the middle of the lesson the involvement level would decrease. However, it would only ever decrease by 1 level. This would imply that pupil concentration was declining as the lesson progresses. Finally, at the end of the lesson after pupils were informed that the lesson was coming to an end the involvement levels increase to either where it was at the start of the lesson or higher. This supports Bunce, Flens and Neiles (2010) claim that as a lesson progresses, student concentration decreases in cycles.

By the end of the lesson all pupils had an involvement level or either 4 or 5. The overall scores for the two lessons show that involvement levels ranged around 3 to 5. Therefore, according to Laevers et al (2005) this shows that pupils had moderate to extremely high levels of concentration throughout the duration of both lessons. Following Laevers et al's (2005) theory the pupils should have experienced deeper level learning from this lesson as involvement lessons were high. (Tagg, 2003: cited in Laird et al, 2005) says that deep level learning is associated with a more enjoyable learning experience. This is evident in the feedback from the focus groups as all pupils stated that they enjoyed the lesson.

Laevers et al (2005) argue that children in lessons need to be at levels 4 and 5, this means they are working at their limits of their capabilities. They go on to state that these children will show qualities such as focus, interest and engagement. The findings from this research support this as during the observations these qualities

were recorded as occurring. Moreover, Laevers et al (2005) report that pupils can only gain involvement when they are being challenged. From the focus group discussions all the pupils stated that they found the task to be a challenge. So, this could have been a contributing factor as why the involvement levels were high.

The information gathered from the focus groups on the mini plenaries, as well as from the personal reflection, emphasise the positive impact the mini plenaries had on the lesson. The pupils in particular found them to be helpful to show them the point they should be at, recap on the success criteria, gather ideas from other pupils and to know how much time they have left of the lesson to help set their pace. This is in accordance with Joyce – Gibbons (2016) who argues that mini plenaries offer different benefits to different pupils. For some it can be a procedural, for others it can be cognitive, and others might find the benefit vicarious. Joyce-Gibbons (2016) state that mini plenaries are a form of scaffolding that supports the pupils' learning. The personal reflection mirrors this as from a teacher perspective the mini plenaries were an effective tool to steer children in the direction of the learning goal. This was because it could be used to address any misconceptions and to recap and emphasise the success criteria.

The main purpose of this research was to investigate whether the use of mini plenaries could improve pupil involvement during an independent task. The results and information obtained from the lessons and focus group point towards mini plenaries having a positive impact on pupil involvement during a lesson. This is an important finding for the classes involved in the study as both had suffered with poor concentration levels. In the future it means that the teachers can use mini plenaries as a tool to keep pupil involvement levels high within these classes. This will result in a more effective learning environment for the children and a better teaching environment for the teacher.

There are however a number of limitations that need to be taken into account when looking at the findings and implications of this research. Firstly, looking at the methods of collecting data. Non-participant observation was the method chosen to gather the information from the lessons. This meant there would be an unfamiliar adult within the class watching the lesson. Just the presence of an unfamiliar adult would influence the pupils' behaviour and actions. This influences the validity of the

research. This is called the Hawthorne Effect and is an inevitable bias that needs to be taken into consideration when looking at the findings (McCambridge et al, 2014).

Secondly, the Leuven Scale of Involvement (Laevers et al, 2005) was the tool used to measure pupil involvement. Whereas this tool is well-researched and is used nationally to measure involvement, the adults observing and recording were not experts. They received no training or support in using the scale. In addition, using the table to observe involvement is very subjective. Different adults completed the scale for each lesson so this calls into question the reliability of the results.

Furthermore, as this research is based on six target children within two primary school classes the findings cannot be generalised as the sample is too small and not representative.

The final method of collecting data was the focus group. The dynamics in both focus groups meant that there was always one dominant participant who spoke the most. Therefore, it is difficult to know whether the other participants agreed or were just not confident enough to speak out for themselves. Also, there was an unfamiliar adult involved in the focus group which could have affected the pupils' confidence to speak out. On the other hand, the focus group did produce a lot of valuable information that would not have been available had the focus group not taken place. This essential information shaped the second lesson and mini plenaries.

It is important to recognise when looking at these limitations that the main purpose of this research was close to practice action research. The findings were never going to be shared nationally. The findings and implications from this research are to be used to develop personal practice. Hence, it is not essential that the results can be generalised. The main method used within this research was lesson study. Lesson study is a form of action research that works with small amounts of teachers and pupils. Dudley (2013) argues that lesson study has a positive impact on teaching and learning. This has been the overall outcome of this research, to have a positive impact on a developing teaching career.

Conclusions

The key purpose of this research was to improve personal practice in a specific area. For me this area was pupil involvement. A recent professional teaching experience revealed to me that this was an area of development that needed to be improved by

the next teaching placement. This research has looked at the issue of pupil involvement and the literature has shown why it is essential that children have high levels. For my next placement and for the future it has provided me with skills, knowledge, tools and ideas that can be applied. The use of mini plenaries in lessons is one tool that I will use within my next teaching placement. This is because I had a positive experience using them within the class I taught and the children in both classes stated that they were helpful. Also, when they were used in the two classes in this research involvement levels remained high for the duration of the lesson. In addition, now that I have used the Leuven Scale for Involvement (Laevers et al, 2005) I feel more aware of the different behaviours that are shown for each level of involvement. Therefore, I would feel confident in identifying pupils with low involvement during a lesson and would put something in place to address it. From the literature I researched for this study I am now aware of the consequences of having pupils with low levels of involvement in my class.

This research has also highlighted the importance of pupil voice. During the focus groups the three specific focus pupils gave their opinions on the lesson and how it could be improved. Some of the suggestions I would not have thought of. Therefore, it is vital to ask pupils for feedback on lessons to ensure the lessons are targeted at them. This is another method I will take with me on my final teaching placement and future teaching career.

In my future teaching career, lesson study is a method I would promote and use as a form of continuous development. With school budgets being reduced there is limited money available for training. Lesson study is an ideal solution to this problem. It can be carried out without any cost and the only requirement needed is teacher effort and time. Dudley (2013) has shown that it is a worthwhile process as it can improve teaching and learning. I feel that taking part in this process has improved my knowledge, skills and abilities. I feel confident going into the final teaching placement.

Recommendations

Considering the findings of this research the following recommendations could be proposed:

- High levels of involvement are essential for effective learning

- Low levels of involvement can have a significant impact on pupil attainment
- Mini plenaries are an effective way of guiding pupils towards the learning goal
- Mini plenaries have a positive impact on pupil involvement levels

The findings from this research could be taken forward to inform further research. The research into mini plenaries is still quite limited therefore, this could be the start of an investigation into the relationship between mini plenaries and pupils' involvement levels.

This research suggests that mini plenaries did have a positive effect on pupil involvement but both lessons were literacy lessons. This research would need to be applied across all subjects in the national curriculum to determine whether this relationship is found with all subjects. Moreover, both lessons carried out mini plenaries at 10-minute intervals. Further research could establish what the optimal interval of mini plenaries is. This research included a number of elements within the mini plenary including success criteria, timings and amount of work that should have been completed. Further research could delve into the content of mini plenaries to establish what is most effective. Finally, there was no control group within this research. So, there was no comparison of involvement levels where there were no mini plenaries in a lesson. All of this research combined would give a fuller picture of mini plenaries and inform educational practitioners best practice on mini plenaries.

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Appendix 1

Date:	Observed by:	Activity:
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Level	Involvement	Signals
1	Extremely low	Talking, staring into space, not writing
2	Low	Little writing, slow, distracted, some talking
3	Moderate	Easily distracted, talking and working at the same time
4	High	Mainly working, little talking, engrossed in work
5	Extremely high	Completely engrossed in work, no talking

Interval	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3
10 minutes	Level Comments	Level Comments	Level Comments
20 minutes	Level Comments	Level Comments	Level Comments
30 minutes	Level Comments	Level Comments	Level Comments
40 minutes	Level Comments	Level Comments	Level Comments

Focus Group Questions

1. What did you think of the lesson?
2. Was there anything that you did not like about the lesson?
3. What did you learn from the lesson? How do you know?
4. Were you interested in the topic?
5. Do you remember when we stopped at certain points during the lesson? What did you think of this?
6. Do you think we stopped too much, just enough times or not enough during the lesson? Why do you think this?
7. We are going to be doing this lesson again tomorrow in another class. Is there any way in which you think it could be made better?

Model Beirniad Wedi Adfyfyrio (BWA)

Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model

Dyddiad/Date:

Digwyddiad critigol (Ffocws)/Critical incident (focus):

Profiad/ Experience	
Teimladau/ Feelings Beth yw eich teimladau ynghylch y profiad? <i>"What are your feelings regarding the experience?"</i>	
Cofio a Deall/ Remember and Understand Allwch chi restru'r agweddau ar y profiad dysgu a aeth yn dda? <i>"Can you list the aspects of the learning experience that went well?"</i> Pa elfennau o'r profiad dysgi oedd yn siomedig? <i>"What were the elements of the learning experience that were disappointing?"</i>	
Gwerthuso a dadansoddi/ Evaluate and analyse Beth fyddwch chi'n cadw'r un fath i sicrhau dysgu ac addysgu effeithiol yn y dyfodol? <i>"What will you keep the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?"</i> Beth oedd achos yr elfen siomedig bwysicaf? <i>"What was the cause of the most important disappointing element?"</i>	
Casgliadau a chymau gweithredu/ Conclusions and actions Beth yw eich atebion posibl i'r materiaon siomedig a nodwyd? <i>"What are your possible solutions to the disappointing issues identified?"</i> Beth ydych yn mynd i'w wneud nesaf? <i>"What will you do next?"</i>	

Focus Group 26/03/18 – Lesson one

Main Points

Year 4

What did you think of the lesson?

- “I liked writing my own poem, but it was a bit hard”

Was there anything you didn’t like about the lesson?

- “It was hard to see what words I had already used when I crossed them out”
- Some of the words were quite hard to understand

What did you learn from the lesson?

- How to write a poem
- How to make my poem rhyme
- How to spell hard words
- How to set out a poem

Do you think we stopped the lesson too much, just enough times or not enough times?

- Just enough times
- “It was helpful when you told us how much time we had left so maybe you could say this every time you stop the lesson”

Why do you think this?

- “It was helpful to show us how much work we should have done by then”

How could the lesson be made better?

- Make the words on the sheet bigger and bolder
- We should have one sheet each and not have to share
- There should be more easier words on the sheet and more words like I, to, and and but because I used those words up quickly
- “Could have images of robots on the sheet to help us write the poem because we could remember what one looked like”
- Tell us what some of the harder words mean

Main Points

Year 3/4

What did you think of the lesson?

- The work was quite hard

What did you learn?

- How to write a poem; structure, rhyming, rhythm, features

What did you think of the stopping of the lesson?

- “if we don’t get told how much time we have left we just work slow because we think we have plenty of time!” was found to be helpful for the children. Keeping them involved during the independent task.

Do you think we stopped the lesson too much, just enough times or not enough times?

- The lesson was stopped just enough times. It was a good reminder of what needed to be including in the work, and how much time was left.

How could we improve the lesson?

- Adding more determiner words
- Writing the words down instead of cutting and sticking them

Pupil Assent

I confirm that I witnessed verbal assent being obtained from the pupils in the class. I witnessed that the pupils were informed of the full nature of the research activity, of their right to withdraw and the importance of anonymity and confidentiality during the research activity. I am happy that the pupils were fully briefed before offering their assent to take part in this research activity.

Signed: *Chaher*

Full name: [REDACTED]

Date: 27/3/18



Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child's school is a partner with Yr Athrofa at University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Carmarthen and Swansea. This school offers placements to students who are learning to be teachers.

The student-teacher in your child's class has been given the task of planning, teaching and evaluating one lesson so that he/she can develop specific strategies to improve their own teaching. As part of this, student-teachers will be observing the children's responses and asking some pupils their views on parts of the lesson. This is designed to inform students' own practice and support children's learning.

Any information collected would remain confidential, and both the school and the children would remain anonymous in work produced. The work undertaken would be in line with the University's ethical guidelines. If, at any time, your child does not want to share ideas, they would not be required to do so.

If you are happy for your child to contribute to the project, please complete the parental consent form below and return directly to the school as soon as possible. If you are interested in the outcome of this project or if you have any questions, please contact the University Partnership Office - partnership@uwtsd.ac.uk.

Yours faithfully,

C. Morgan

Canolfan Addysg Athrawon De-Orllewin Cymru  The South West Wales Centre of Teacher Education		1B	
Session Plan – Key Stage 2			
Name of trainee: Jenna Tucker		Session ref: 270318(1)	
Personal target(s) in relation to QTS:			
Year group: 4	No. of learners: 36	ALN: EJ (Cerebral Palsy) SB (ASD) LOS (ASD) All to work with their 1-2-1 support ** TA support for LA table particularly KC and CB.	
Additional Adults:			
Learning objective(s): To use key features to create a poem		Success criteria: To use key features to create a poem: - Title - Adjectives - Connectives - Rhyming - Alliteration - Correct structure - Personification	
Links to previous learning:			
Curriculum coverage (range, skills)			
English: - use the characteristic features of an increasing range of continuous and non-continuous texts in their writing, using imagination where appropriate - use nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, connectives and verb tenses in their writing			
<i>Literacy(LNF)</i> - write for different purposes and readers choosing words for variety and interest - improve writing, checking for clarity and organisation		<i>Numeracy (LNF)</i>	
DCF	<i>Thinking</i> - Reviewing outcomes and success criteria - Evaluate own learning and thinking	ESDGC	YCC
Key vocabulary(English/Welsh): Poem Title Alliteration Rhyming Connective Adjective Grammar Structure			
Time	Session activities, organisation and management		Key questions & Assessment for Learning opportunities
5 mins	Introduction - Read a poem to the class - Ask what is was and what features in includes		<u>Questions</u> What kind of writing is this? What features does a poem include? Can you give me an example?

	- Title, adjectives, personification, alliteration, rhyming, repetition, structure and connectives - Explain task	
40 mins	Main activities - Children to be given a jumbled up poem - Children to create their own poetry using the jumbled words Differentiation – Level of difficulty of words given and level of support <u>Mini plenaries through lesson</u> - Check one of the features (success criteria) has it been included? - Tell them where they should be at that point - Check for problems, understanding and questions - Have you got a title? You should have done around 2 lines by now - Have you included an adjective? You should have done around 3 lines by now - Have you got any rhyming? You should have done around 3 lines by now - Can you check the success criteria and make sure you have included as many as you can? We are nearly at the end of a lesson so can you start bringing poem to an end.	<u>Resources</u> Jumbled up poem Literacy books Pens and pencils
5 mins	Plenary - Children to share their poems - Show what key features have been used – tick off checklist - Show the original poem - Thumbs up/down for confidence of writing a poem	<u>Assessment for Learning</u> AfL checklist Questioning Observation Thumbs up/down

Lesson one

Date:	Observed by:	Activity:
24/3/15	Jenna	Literacy Poetry

Level	Involvement	Signals
1	Extremely low	Talking, staring into space, not writing
2	Low	Little writing, slow, distracted, some talking
3	Moderate	Easily distracted, talking and working at the same time
4	High	Mainly working, little talking, engrossed in work
5	Extremely high	Completely engrossed in work, no talking

Interval	Child 1 ^A	Child 2 ^G	Child 3 ^{AV}
10 minutes	Level 3 Comments: staring at sheet for long periods	Level 3 Comments: lots of rubbing out.	Level 4 Comments: Engrossed in work
20 minutes	Level 4 Comments: mainly writing	Level 4 Comments: Mainly writing	Level 3 Comments: writing then staring into space
30 minutes	Level 2 Comments: Little writing singing + messing around	Level 4 Comments: Mainly writing and looking for words	Level 3 Comments: Talking and working at same time
40 minutes	Level 4 Comments: mainly writing	Level 4 Comments: mainly writing	Level 4 Comments: mainly writing

Lesson two

Date: 27/3/18	Observed by: [redacted]	Activity: Literacy poem
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Level	Involvement	Signals
1	Extremely low	Talking, staring into space, not writing
2	Low	Little writing, slow, distracted, some talking
3	Moderate	Easily distracted, talking and working at the same time
4	High	Mainly working, little talking, engrossed in work
5	Extremely high	Completely engrossed in work, no talking

Interval	Child 1 D	Child 2 A	Child 3 B
<u>10 minutes</u> Before 1st mini plenary	Level 3 Comments Talking + working at the same time.	Level 4 Comments mainly working, stopping to talk sometimes.	Level 4 Comments mainly working, engrossed in work.
<u>20 minutes</u> After 1st mini plenary	Level 4 Comments Engrossed in work. Some talking - but about the work.	Level 4 Comments Engrossed in work, a lot of concentration on the work.	Level 3 Comments a lot of talking, working at the same time.
<u>30 minutes</u> After 2nd mini plenary	Level ~~4~~ 4 Comments Engrossed in work, no talking at all. - slight talking after a while.	Level 4 Comments mainly working, little talking.	Level 3 Comments Talking and working at the same time.
<u>40 minutes</u> after 3rd mini plenary.	Level 3 Comments mainly working but more talking.	Level ~~3~~ 4 Comments mainly working, little talking.	Level 4 Comments engrossed in work, little talking.
~~45~~ mins. 4-5 After 4th mini plenary.	Level 4 Concentration mainly on the work - little talking.	Level 4 Engrossed in work, little talking.	Level 4/5 - Engrossed in work - little no talking.

Model Beirniad Wedi Adfyfyrio (BWA)

Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model

Dyddiad/Date: 27.03.18

Digwyddiad critigol (Ffocws)/Critical incident (focus): The use of mini-plenaries and level of involvement within a literacy lesson

Teimladau/ Feelings Beth yw eich teimladau ynghylch y profiad? "What are your feelings regarding the experience?"	Overall, I think that the lesson went well. The children all understood the task, they all engaged with the task and produced a range of different poems. I was really pleased with the different poems that the children managed to produce.
Cofio a Deall/ Remember and Understand Allwch chi restru'r agweddau ar y profiad dysgu a aeth yn dda? "Can you list the aspects of the learning experience that went well?" Pa elfennau o'r profiad dysgu oedd yn siomedig? "What were the elements of the learning experience that were disappointing?"	There were many aspects that went well during the lesson. Firstly, and most importantly the mini plenaries worked well. From my point of view, I feel like they refocused the children's attention particularly during the middle of the lesson where attention levels dropped. Secondly, the practical nature of the task meant that the children were engaged during the whole of the lesson as they were not just writing. Finally, the children used their prior knowledge of the key features of poems to be able to construct one independently. The most disappointing element was that the children did not produce as much as I would have liked. The cutting and sticking of the words took a bit of time so cut into the time allocated to the lesson.
Gwerthuso a dadansoddi/ Evaluate and analyse Beth fyddwch chi'n cadw'r un fath i sicrhau dysgu ac addysgu effeithiol yn y dyfodol? "What will you keep the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?" Beth oedd achos yr elfen siomedig bwysicaf? "What was the cause of the most important disappointing element?"	To ensure effective teaching and learning in the future I will: • Continue to use mini plenaries to ensure children's engagement levels remain high through the lesson • Include more practical lessons within literacy to keep it interesting and also to help those children who struggle to write large amounts I would have liked the children to have produced a longer poem as many of them only managed a few lines. Although what they did produce was of good quality. I found with this lesson even the lower attaining children, who usually struggle with writing larger amounts, produced detailed and longer poems. Therefore, next time I do this type of lesson I will ensure that I leave enough time for the children to fully complete the task.

Casgliadau a chatau gweithredu/ Conclusions and actions <i>Beth yw eich atebion posibl i'r materiaon siomedig a nodwyd?</i> <i>"What are your possible solutions to the disappointing issues identified?"</i> <i>Beth ydych yn mynd i'w wneud nesaf?</i> <i>"What will you do next?"</i>	In any future lessons I will adopt the use of mini plenaries. They are a useful way of bringing the children's back to the task if their attention has started to wonder. They can also address any misconceptions you have noticed and refer children back to the success criteria of the lesson. Furthermore, I believe the addition of letting children know timings and how long is left in the lesson gives them an indication of the pace they should be working at to complete the task. I felt that the children remained on task through the duration due to the mini plenaries and therefore this produced better pieces of work and higher levels of learning. This is in accordance with Laevers et al (2005) who state that higher levels of involvement lead to deeper level learning.
Y profiad newydd / <i>Transformed experience</i>	