

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

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INTRODUCTION

The imminent transformation of the education system in Wales, as a result of the “Successful Futures” Report (Donaldson, 2015), is a welcome and overdue change that will ensure the long-term success and well being of every learner in Wales. In order for our learners to be “ambitious and capable” (ibid), it is imperative that we reflect on our own good practices and strive to develop a process of self-improvement (Tripp, 2011). An excellent method as suggested and advocated by (Tripp, 2011) is though the engagement of “critical incident analysis”. It is Tripp’s judgement that this critical, reflective approach is key to developing educators beyond practitioners and into professionals.

This paper will focus on a critical incident observed in a classroom setting and explore, in some detail, the potential roots of that incident. At the end of the process, the results are expected to inform future professional teacher practice and encourage aspiring educators to maintain this critical thinking throughout their teaching practice. It is important to note from the outset that the conclusions or inferences from this small scale enquiry should be regarded tentatively and with caution due to the time scale limitations and the subjective analysis of the individual researcher.

OBSERVATION

SCHOOL & CLASS CONTEXT

The data that informs the basis of this paper was collated from an observation that took place in a mixed gender, English language primary school (hereafter School X) located in an area of South Wales, which is considered to have a high level of deprivation. This is reflected in the 43.9% average Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility within the 526 cohort. Additionally, the school has identified 48% of its pupils as having additional learning needs (ALN). These statistics are significantly above the national averages, of 18% and 21% respectively. Despite the challenges presented by these figures, a recent inspection carried out by Estyn resulted in an overall judgement of “Good”. However, ERW identified that some support is needed with the allocation of a Yellow status in their national categorisation. (WAG, My local school, 2018. WAG, Estyn, 2019 [1]).

Further considerations, regarding the specific parameters of the observation, include the classroom environment in which the observation took place. The focus was on a morning session in a Year One class. At full capacity the pupil count is 30 with an even gender mix. There was also one teacher and a member of support staff present who led literacy and numeracy focus tasks with small groups whilst the remaining pupils participated in the continuous provisions available (See appendix 1). Pupils were appointed to groups categorised as red, yellow and green which indicated their attainment levels and allowed the teacher to differentiate to the needs of the pupils.

METHODOLOGY

Undertaking observational research has a broad spectrum of approaches. However, Cohen, Manion and Morrison provide an extensive analysis of appropriate research methods. For instance, the variations between qualitative and quantitative research, with the intentions of the former focusing on making inferences on the data gathered and generating theory and the later hypothesising and collecting data to test or confirm theory (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013, pp. 217-223). Therefore, the most purposeful approach to conducting this investigation, through a critical analysis, would appear to be a qualitative one due to the subjective nature of the data that will be collected during the observation period. Marshall and Rossman (1989, as cited in Kawulich, 2005) define observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study". It relies on the researcher to draw conclusions based upon the incident or phenomena observed and apply interpretation to the meaning and cause.

We can further refine our observational approach by defining the observer's role in more detail, with regards to their involvement in the observation, as participant or non-participant. Although, Whyte (1979, as cited in *ibid*) emphasises that a collaborative relationship between the researchers and informants, in participant observation, can be the most effective way of conducting observational research, it could prove ineffectual for our purpose. Participant observation requires the researcher to fully immerse themselves into the informant's culture and environment over an extended period. Although this approach produces data which is well informed and nuanced due to the rapport that is developed with the informants, it depends on the informants accepting the researcher into their natural environment and not affecting the status quo. It can also inform biased opinions as the researcher develops their relationship to the informants. The very presence of an observer can disrupt regular routines and behaviours of the informants, "invalidating the data obtained", known as the "Hawthorne effect" (Encyclopedia.com, 2019, Kumar, 2014, p.174) or "observer effect" (Papatheodorou, Luff, Gill, 2011, p.90). This is a limitation shared with non-participant observation. Nevertheless, it is non-participant observation which is

considered to be least intrusive. In addition, the researcher can conduct their observation with impartiality, void of preconceptions.

Non-participation would allow the opportunity to obtain a holistic snapshot of the informants' stimuli. Subsequently, non-participation will be the foremost method, however it is implausible that the researcher will remain invisible for the entirety of the observation and certain contexts may well prescribe participation, therefore a quasi-participant approach should be implemented to this enquiry.

To support the small scale, short-term, qualitative, non-participant method, elements of a naturalistic enquiry should be considered. One feature is the utilisation of a case study, through which, three relevant and significant questions are posed regarding the "characterisation", "cause" and "consequences" of an observed phenomenon. (Cohen, Manion and Morrison et al, 2013, pp. 221 - 223). These questions would serve well in this instance by ascertaining deeper understanding of a real-life event. Moreover, Ayres endorses questioning as a means to divulge information from an observation by simple asking, why? (Ayres, 2013). This simple method will inevitably, in due course, arrive at the crux of a phenomena and will be instrumental in reflection, post-critical incident. (See appendix 5-8)

Capturing and recording data during an observation requires a systematic approach that results in concise and meaningful data. There are many devices that researchers employ to capture data, however this specific scenario would benefit from the application of field notes. (See appendix 1 - 4)

"DeWalt, DeWalt, and Wayland describe field notes as both data and analysis, as the notes provide an accurate description of what is observed and are the product of the observation process" (Ayres, 2013)

This method is proven to be effective as it enables the researcher to accurately record the multifaceted and spontaneous nature of observation. In order to keep the observations focused and detailed, the data will be recorded on observation/field note documents (see appendix 1 - 4). They will be arranged in the form of areas of interest, the questions of which have been adapted from Fletcher Wood (2016). In addition, to support the data, an assisted reflective conclusions (ARC) model will be used to assist in deciphering the data and draw conclusions (See appendix 5 -8).

CRITICAL INCIDENT

The critical incident that was observed involves an interaction between the classroom teaching assistant and an individual male pupil and for the purposes of this study, they will

be referred to as Subject Y and Subject Z, respectively, so as to comply with BERA (2018) guidelines on ethical practice and anonymity.

Subject Y was leading Subject Z in a numeracy focused task. The task involved addition and subtraction of one from another number. This task was set for the lowest attaining pupils who were placed in the red group. Other pupils had already completed the task and Subject Z was left with Subject Y to bring the task to completion. Subject Z appeared unanimated and gazed blankly at Subject Y as they provided instructions. In order to stimulate a response from Subject Z, Subject Y said, "You're not listening to me. Why aren't you listening? You need to learn to listen." Rather than motivate Subject Z it appeared to make them become more introverted and triggered a negative emotional response that hindered them from engaging fully in the task. Subject Y went on to say, "I've already explained how to do this. I can't explain it any other way." Eventually Subject Y was satisfied that Subject Z had achieved the desired outcome and completed the task, one could speculate that the task had been completed but the learning had not been embedded. Subject Z gave the impression they felt vulnerable which was evident in their self-isolation and quiet tears. When questioned about what had upset them, Subject Z pointed at the desk they had been working and said, "I got it wrong".

Although the climax of this situation may seem extreme, it is not an unfamiliar scenario in the classroom. The appearance of a pupil not listening poses a plethora of questions and may be rooted in underlying issues that, if identified and addressed earlier, may have had a more desirable and positive outcome in this instance. This scenario presents several topical issues of discussion including but not limited to, pupil engagement, emotional conditioning, defiant choices, capability and attainment.

During his review of the current curriculum in Wales, Professor Donaldson identified four key purposes for a new curriculum, two of which have particular relevance to this incident. Donaldson (2015) categorises these as "to create: ambitious and capable learners ... healthy and confident individuals". One may contest that this incident fell short of meeting these purposes. As educators the onus is on us to ensure that pupils are able to access the curriculum and if they aren't able to, we must ask ourselves, why?

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an abundance of professional literature surrounding some of the key areas as previously identified in the critical incident under analysis. Firstly, one should consider the impact that assessment, in particular assessment for learning (AFL), has on pupils' learning and experience. The significant influence of Black and Wiliam's 'Inside the Black Box' (1998) has adapted the way in which we implement assessment in education. They argue that,

“Teaching and learning have to be interactive. Teachers need to know about their pupils progress and difficulties with learning so they can adapt their work to meet pupils needs.” (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p.2).

Taras echoes the importance of the implementation of assessment,

“Learning and teaching are inseparable in educational discourse, yet it is assessment that has been shown to be the single most important component that influences student learning and education in general.” (Taras, 2008, p.389).

We develop this understanding of pupil learning requirements through AFL. The term ‘assessment for learning’ is interchangeable with ‘formative assessment’. Assessments are considered to be ‘formative’ when “the evidence is used to adapt the teaching work to meet the needs [of learners]” (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p.2). This adaptive way of teaching is successful as it fragments the predictable and repetitious routines that pupils are familiar with. Black and Wiliam (1998, p.9) recognise that pupils “appear to have become accustomed to receiving classroom teaching as arbitrary sequence of exercises.” Formative assessment is recognised by experts as being, “the most powerful tool we have for both raising standards and empowering lifelong learners” (ARG, 1999, p.2), a sentiment that is reflected in one of the 4 key purposes of the curriculum proposed by Donaldson (2015, p.31), namely, “Ambitious and capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives”. This establishes that AFL is an integral component in elevating the “motivation and self-esteem of pupils” (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p.5) and is “a force for change in classroom practice” (Gardner et al, 2008, p.5). Further evidence of the constructive influence that effective AFL strategies have are apparent in a study dedicated to low attaining students which revealed that assessment feedback helps to “Enhance their learning” (Fuchs et al, 1997 as cited in, Black and Wiliam, 1998, p.4) whilst also reducing “the spread of attainment” (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p.4).

Assessment plays a pivotal role in engaging pupils in their work; there is a paradoxical conundrum with this statement as pupils need to be engaged to learn, however, “Pupils who come to see themselves as unable to learn usually cease to take school seriously” (ibid p.4), therefore disengaging with their education and progress. For this reason, the way in which we provide feedback and assess pupils must be approached judiciously. Pupils who continually receive negative comments or low grades are taught “that they lack ‘ability’, so they are not motivated” (ibid p.6). The quality of assessment feedback is paramount in its success; simply acknowledging AFL as a new strategic tool will not suffice,

where many schools have given “the impression of having implemented AFL when in reality the change in pedagogy that it requires has not taken place” (ARG, 2006, p.9). Black and Wiliam (1998, p.6) share the thinking that schools have a concerning tendency to assess “quantity and presentation of work and to neglect the quality in its relation to learning.” The success of assessment for learning is dependent on the understanding and purpose of its application not just implementation of the strategies. Where learning is most effective, pupils are aware of the objectives that they aspire to attain. If there is a disparity between the task and the learning objectives, then pupils will lack understanding of expectations and in turn the sense of accomplishment. When learning objectives have transparency and clarity, self and peer assessment are effective means of gauging understanding only when pupils “have a sufficiently clear picture of the targets that their learning is meant to attain” (ibid p.9). Black and Wiliam (1998, p.10) also state that,

“Tasks have to be justified in terms of the learning aims they serve, and they can only work well if opportunities for pupils to communicate their evolving understanding are built into the planning.”

Pupils display their understanding through their verbal and physical interactions. It is important to notice opportunities to express understanding and they should be designed into the lesson. One way to ascertain understanding or the lack thereof is through questioning and this can be an efficient and effective strategy, nevertheless it is not without its pitfalls. Pupils who exhibit low self-esteem “are reluctant to ask questions out of fear of failure” (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p.9). Furthermore, with regards to questioning, “one common problem is that teachers do not allow enough quiet time so pupils can think and offer an answer” (Ibid, p.11).

Although there seems to be a firm assimilation of AFL into the education system in Wales, it has, understandably, been met with some resistance. Along with their recommendations, Black and Wiliam (1998, p.15) sympathetically affirm that, “the improvement of formative assessment cannot be a simple matter. There is no ‘quick fix’ that can be added to existing practice with promise of rapid reward.” The challenges of institutionalising new initiatives into a system already well established are corroborated by Webb and Jones (2009, p182), who say, “the difficulties and resistance to bringing about culture change regarding traditional roles and assessment practices should not be underestimated.”

A final word on AFL is that it is a powerful tactic in a teacher’s repertoire and has a tremendous amount of impact on pupils’ learning and development. It seemingly coincides with the teaching principles of a behaviourist approach, particularly the theories of B.F.

Skinner. According to Skinner, teachers should provide immediate feedback to pupils and instructions to alter behaviours to achieve a desirable outcome. Austin Omomia and Omomia (2014, pp.174 - 178) describe behaviour as being “determined by a desire to gain positive reinforcement and to avoid negative reinforcement” and Akinboye (1992, as cited in, Austin Omomia and Omomia, 2014, p.175) “argued that reinforcement is a central concept in human acquisition of skills and performance competence.” These statements validate the use of AFL in teaching and learning but Taras (2009, p.67) is certainly anxious “that assessment for learning does not become the new Pandora’s box of assessment”, suggesting that if not applied effectually AFL could prove to be obstructive rather than productive.

A topical subject for further discussion, alongside assessment for learning, is the field of mental and emotional wellbeing in young people. Through the analysis of AFL, we have discovered that pupils are motivated to learn and excel when they are emotionally secure and content which is reflected in the statement, “There is overwhelming evidence, that pupils learn more effectively ... if they are happy in their work.” (Weare, 2000, p.5). The importance of wellbeing is becoming increasingly recognised by authorities involved in children’s welfare. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), in 2011, were the first country in the UK to make the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) part of legislation. The implications of which are addressed in a document supported by Save The Children,

“The Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasises in particular the importance of the child early development and defines children who have the right to develop his/her developmental potential to the highest level possible, while the UN countries are obliged to ensure to every child the standards about the physical, mental, spiritual and social development.” (Voko, Duci and Tahsini, 2014, p.12)

The articles in the UNCRC encapsulate mental wellbeing and acknowledge its involvement in the holistic approach to a child’s overall development. Donaldson (2015) also magnifies its significance by his suggestion of embedding it into the curriculum as an Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE), under the descriptor of “Health and Wellbeing”. The Welsh Assembly Government are proactive in applying these recommendations and report that,

“Wellbeing is at the heart of the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) and is a crucial core element of the work of education settings. This is also reflected in the increased emphasis on wellbeing within the new

common inspection framework, introduced in 2010 by Estyn.” (WAG, 2010, p.1)

The importance of valuing young people’s mental health and wellbeing is emphasised by, Weare, who remarks “that young people are being deprived of meaningful support, they are being faced with increased demands and challenges” (2000, p.3). Traditionally, limitations due to instability with mental health have been viewed as being reserved for a minority and so “pupils with lower abilities, or those seen as troublesome or troubled” (Bender, 1987) have exclusively received the support . However, in their 2019 survey, The Children’s Society identified “a minority of children (almost 12%) reported low well-being” (The Children’s Society, 2019, p.19). This equates to approximately 1 in 10 children and although it is described as a minority, it is a significant and alarming statistic. These children often go undiagnosed as they express no outward symptoms of mental ill-health but conceal low levels of wellbeing. The two are not simply polarised but share a correlation as recognised by The Children’s Society (2019, p.13), “Children may thus have low subjective wellbeing without symptoms of mental illness, and high subjective wellbeing despite a diagnosis of mental illness.”

Gardner (2017) acknowledges multiple forms of intelligence (MI Theory), one of which was emotional ‘intrapersonal’ intelligence. He proposed that this form of intelligence was inseparable to cognitive and intellectual intelligence. It is Maslow’s opinion that it is important to “satisfying emotional and social needs before people can concentrate on matters of the intellect has long been recognised” (1970) and this is evident in his work on the ‘Hierarchy of Needs’. For children to be able to access the higher tier of self-actualisation, where their motivation for growth is stimulated, their self esteem and confidence must be established.

It is universally recognised that schools are integral to developing a child’s sense of worth. Weare commends schools as “one of the most important environments for influencing self-esteem in young people and in children” (2000, p.67), an accolade which The Children’s society concurs with in the conclusion of their 2018 report, “the theme of school emerges as important for further focus” (2019, P.77). Now we face an ironic juncture; despite the influential changes brought about by schools, it transpires that The Children’s Society’s ‘The Good Childhood Report’ revealed children were “least happy with the school that they go to.” (ibid, p.17), Whilst interestingly, “boys are unhappier with their schoolwork than girls” (ibid, p.13). Additionally, when surveyed, a set of Year 6 pupils placed the ‘importance’ of achieving good grades as one of their lowest priorities. In contrast their ‘worries’ of achieving good grades ranked as one of the main concerns (ibid). The duality in this demonstrates that children experience anxiety and pressures imposed on them from the summative

assessments deployed by the school. Evaluating their findings, The Children's Society, saw the overarching merits that schools provide to mental health and wellbeing and suggested "a key way of improving children's subjective experience may be to improve their experience of school" (ibid, p.77). Weare (2000) explores extensively how schools can effectively develop the emotional literacy of their pupils and it appears to predominantly be through their interactions with others. When pupils are valued and nurturing, trusting relationships are formed, they feel safe and thrive academically and emotionally. As educators we must be aware that our actions and words have profound consequences on the pupils we teach, which is why a humanistic perspective is advised. Weare warns that (2000, p.67) "the persistent experience of failure that so many of our children undergo simply confirms in them the belief in their own uselessness", which is why, "Schools need to focus on positive not negative behaviours, attitudes and outcomes" (ibid, p.109). Parents' wishes are that teachers should aim to "build [a] child's self-esteem, by using rewards, and avoiding negative public criticism." (Voko, Duci and Tahsini, 2014, p.56) Following the teaching of practitioners such as John Holt would be conducive to a child centred approach to learning.

REFLECTION / EVALUATION & NEXT STEPS

As previously stated, there is a clear shift from teachers and educators developing from practitioners into professionals (Tripp, 2015) and the 2017 Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership reflect this (WAG, 2019, [2]). Pedagogy, the way in which we teach, is paramount. The critical incident that has been discussed in this paper reveals that there is not one single way to teach all children, rather, we should be adaptive to the needs of the individual child.

In the case of this critical incident, one could surmise that several assumptions had taken place, namely that, the task was appropriate to the attainment level of Subject Z. The fact that Subject Z 'was not listening' may well suggest that they lacked understanding of the task or concept being taught. These assumptions may not have manifested if AFL strategies were implemented. A mini plenary in the form of 'traffic lights' may have been beneficial here (BBC and Wiliam, 2010) and established the extent of Subject Z's understanding. Furthermore, highlighting the learning intentions of the task could prove useful in analysing the critical incident. On observation, the task (see Appendix 1) seemed passive and mechanical and the learning objective was not made explicit which made the process lack some purpose. The practice of SMART learning objectives is a key component in AFL and if tasks are "justified in terms of the aims they serve" (Black and Wiliam, 1998) then pupils are more likely fulfil the task requirements.

Subject Z appeared to have difficulty recording, in written form, the mathematical concepts that were being taught. Was this the core purpose of the activity? One could

suspect that it was not and argue that firstly understanding the principles of the concept should be the focus. This understanding could have been expressed in different ways, one of which is utilising the resources in the classroom such as Lego bricks to demonstrate practically and visually. Additionally, there could have been some further confusion over the concepts as two opposing skills (namely addition and subtraction) were being practised. A suggestion is that, if it is clear that a pupil cannot grasp a concept, which Subject Z appeared not to, then one should concentrate on consolidating and reinforcing one of the skills.

Subject Z's appearance of not listening could be owing to a lack of confidence. The role of teacher is to recognise this deficiency in self-esteem and attempt to motivate the pupil. This is where AFL and wellbeing work symbiotically. Although Subject Y attempted to engage Subject Z through negative feedback, which is a plausible if somewhat a mostly ineffectual tactic, in hindsight it was obstructive to the learning. Weare's advice that "schools need to focus on positive not negative behaviours, attitudes and outcomes" (2000, p.109) is appropriate to this situation and a valid suggestion. These suggestions are limited and by no means exhaustive.

The process of reflection is a deep and sometimes painful pursuit as it encourages the participant to challenge assumptions and their own beliefs and think critically about themselves. Reflection is fundamental in self development and should be encouraged as part of continuous professional improvement. This quality should be aspirational to all that undertake work involving young people, particularly, student teachers. The process that this paper outlines, performs as a structure that one should endeavour to follow. It introduces assessment for learning and, mindfulness and wellbeing in young people as dominant notions in motivating and engaging young people in education. Student teachers who aspire to thrive and be impactful in the classroom, should consider embracing these to inform their future practice.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, educational pedagogy and practice, informed by research is constantly evolving and has many complexities to consider. Teaching is a learning process that should be continually reflected upon, evaluated and refined. The Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership have been designed to support teachers to achieve excellence and fulfil potential in themselves so that it can be emulated by their students. Pedagogy is the predominant standard which is supported by collaboration to allow it to spread, innovation to move it forward, professional learning to take it go deeper and leadership to help it grow.

This investigation of a critical incident has shown pedagogy to be nonlinear; it should be guided by the needs of the pupil, forming new pathways to approach teaching. It has also

proven that collaboration, through observations, offer a fresh perspective to how we teach and learn. Teachers can be overwhelmed with new and ever-changing challenges and they must be able to think creatively and innovatively to overcome them. Professional learning should be research-driven and reflective as outlined in this paper. There is no limit to our capacity learn and develop, as a deep reflective approach reveals a multitude of new questions to be answered. Finally, all teachers should consider themselves leaders and develop the leadership qualities to support their own growth as well as pioneer the way for the education profession.

APPENDICESAppendix 1**OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES 1**

Date: 26.09.19, morning session, 9 am – 10am

Lesson details: Teacher - Guiding pupils through “Reading Eggs” assessment.
TA – Numeracy task, counting treasure hunt and plus one, minus one number sheets.
Continuous provision for other pupils including Play dough, Building Blocks, small world and dress up box.
Class: Year 1
Pupil numbers: 30 (15m/15f)

Classroom culture

When pupils were participating in activities led by adults there was a good focus on the learning, objectives were clear and pupils were engaged in the activity. However, there appeared to be a lack of focus when it came to the continuous provision. Pupils flittered from one area to another with no clear objective and a tenuous engagement in the activity.

Objectives

The teacher explained that the pupils would be developing their number bonds to 10 and led a whole class, call and response activity “I am, we are”. Which acted as an APK strategy.

With regards to the continuous provision, objectives appeared to be invisible, in a sense that they weren’t obviously presented to the pupils. When questioned the pupils were unclear as to why they were doing a particular activity. However, through observation pupils subconsciously explored varied elements of the curriculum.

Direction

Pupils understood what the numeracy task involved as they had a worksheet to complete, although no success criteria were discussed.

Access and challenge

During the “I am, we are” activity many pupils became disengaged due to long waiting times as the question was being passed around the circle.

Assessment

At the end of each reading eggs assessment a level was generated for the pupil which gave an indication of their reading aptitude.

The teacher used an APK strategy by playing a numeracy game with the whole class and got every pupil to answer a direct question. This also acted as an AFL providing immediate feedback as to whether the pupils understood the concept of number bonds.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

Are there particular telling moments and examples which it would be helpful to discuss?

During the morning session a female pupil was completing a numeracy worksheet as part of the continuous provision. She completed the sheet rather quickly and announced, “I’m not doing this anymore!” and scrunching her work sheet into a ball. Another pupil who was with her copied her actions.

On multiple occasions pupils threw objects (Building blocks, multi links, puppets) with disregard, once they had finished.

The teacher used a “5,4,3,2,1 countdown” as a class management technique however pupils were not listening and there were no consequences.

After play time pupils were told to sit on the carpet with no task or focus to occupy them.

The teacher was talking with the classroom TA. Pupils started to become restless and talking. The teacher told them “be quiet, stop talking”

During the numeracy “add 1, minus 1” led by the classroom TA, a male pupil couldn’t complete the task. The TA attempted to get him on task however he was unresponsive.

The TA then said “You’re not listening to me. Why aren’t you listening? You need to learn to listen.” Additional comments from the TA followed as “I have already explained how to do this. I can’t explain it any other way.” Once the pupil completed the task he sat on the carpet and became tearful. When questioned why he was upset he said “Because I got it wrong”

Appendix 2**OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES 2**

Date: 19.09.19, afternoon session, 1.15pm – 2.15am

Lesson details: Pupils were studying tornados. The teacher introduced a literacy task which involved selecting 'wow' words to describe a tornado. They looked at an illustration and a photograph of a tornado and discussed the difference. They had to select one to be the stimulus for their 'wow' words.

Class: Year 4

Pupil numbers: 26

Classroom culture

In the initial stages of the lesson there appeared to be a lot of fidgeting and lack of focus from the pupils. The teacher instigated a discussion to focus them in and this worked for the most part. However, the front table did not participate and we disengaged. Note: This was a table of the lower attaining pupils.

Once the task was explained and aims set most pupils focused in more and engaged with the task.

Objectives

Objectives and success criteria were clearly displayed and referred to on the board. Independence was developed by giving responsibility to pupils for distributing and collecting resources.

An APK was used to activate prior knowledge and set expectations of the task. This was done through a modelled exemplar.

Direction

Learning objectives were displayed and accessible. Pupils were reminded of time limits to keep them focused on task.

Access and challenge

The task was differentiated to the needs of the pupils, MAT pupils were asked to gather data from multiple source (thesaurus and iPad) where as ALN Pupils were supported separately by the teacher and were given a word bank to select from. There was also an extra challenge set when it appeared progress had slowed. The teacher asked for pupils to find 4 more words.

Assessment

A mini plenary was used mid-way through the task. The teacher selected a pupil's work to display on the board to act as a WAGOLL.

Specifics / Critical Incidents

The teacher used a focus activity in the start of the lesson to active critical thinking.

"things that make you go hmm 'What would you do if you weren't scared?'". One pupil replied "Id scream at my mother"

A pupil acted negatively by temporarily disengaging from task and becoming visually distressed when the teacher scored a point because of the negative behaviour of another pupil. Pupil vs teacher points system.

One pupil asking a new member of staff if they can go to the toilet when the already know the rules.

Appendix 3**OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES 3**

Date: 20.09.19, afternoon session, 1.15pm - 2.15am
Lesson details: in the lesson observed pupils were undertaking an extensive spelling test Class: Year 4 Pupil numbers: 30
Classroom culture Pupils were seated at their desks and very relaxed. Very little fuss was made when the teacher announced that they would be doing a spelling test.
Objectives Summative assessment was used to obtain data on the pupils' level of spelling. Pupils were to develop their literacy skills
Direction Pupils understood how many words were in the test and knew they had to attempt all of them. It was clear that they were successful if they could spell the words accurately.
Access and challenge The test consisted of 60 words that became increasingly difficult.
Assessment Though summative assessment pupils will gain a mark to display how well they performed. They will also have a greater understanding of what they need to develop and would have consolidated what they already know
Specifics / Critical Incidents Pupil repeatedly swing on chair and asked multiple times to stop but ignore all instructions. Pupil vomiting in front of the class, asked to go to the toilet prior but was asked to wait. Pupil shouting out to ask clarification of spelling which had already gone by.

Appendix 4**OBSERVATION / FIELD NOTES 4**

Date: 27.09.19, morning session, 10.15pm - 11.15am
Lesson details: pupils were developing their understanding of the welsh language including numbers and colours. A puppet was used to introduce the words to the pupils, and they recalled them back at the puppet. Later on, a story was told to using which used the words they were exploring. Class: Year 1/ 2 split Pupil numbers: 30
Classroom culture Pupils were fascinated by the puppet and were accustomed to its use. They were mostly engaged throughout because of it.
Objectives Learn numbers in welsh 1 -20 including some colours.
Direction Verbal feedback was given by the teacher through the puppet.
Access and challenge Pupils were selected using lollipop sticks to be challenged individually
Assessment Lollipop stick were used to also gather information on individuals understanding
Specifics / Critical Incidents Tidy up time - secret mess was used when pupils were not participating in the cleaning Pupils shouting out and pre-empting answers when there should be whole class recital. Pupil wondering around the classroom when they should have been with the rest of the class on the carpet.

Appendix 5*Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model***Date:** 26.09.19**Critical incident (focus):** 'Pupil not listening and withdrawing from a task'

<i>Experience</i>	
<i>Feelings</i> <i>"What are your feelings regarding the experience?"</i>	The experience evoked a number of juxtaposed feelings and emotions. Initially, shock coupled with anger was the primary emotional prompted by the language and negativity used by the TA. This was closely followed by guilt, having recognised this scenario as one that I had been participant to in my practice in the past. As I began to reflect on the situation, I became sympathetic towards all involved in the situation. The TA's reaction could be justified and the frustrations were understandable, on the other hand, the pupil's difficulties sparked a series of questions. The raw emotions that firstly manifested evolved into an analytical, sensitive and reflective thought process.
<i>Remember and Understand</i> <i>"Can you list the aspects of the incident in the context of learning?"</i>	This incident was very relevant in the context of learning. The pupil appeared to not engage with the learning as they 'were not listening'. The embedment of the learning could not take place as the incident continued. Furthermore, due to the negative experience felt by the pupil, it could possibly have a detrimental effect on any future learning, specifically in the area under study.
<i>Evaluate and analyse</i> <i>"What could be kept the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?"</i>	The use of visual aids in the form of 'white boards' was utilized well. Also, the dilution of the group sizes made it more manageable to facilitate the exercise. The differentiation of work and separation of pupils into attainment level groups made the learning achievable and focused.

<i>Conclusions and actions</i> <i>"What are your possible solutions to the issue identified?"</i> <i>"What could be done next?"</i>	Situations like this would benefit from the application of AFL strategies. Mini plenaries Peer assessment/ teaching Traffic lighting SMART learning objectives and explicit success criteria As educators we should reflect on our own practice and identify our own limitations. Utilise resources available to us to enhance the learning. We should also be conscious of our impact on young people and considerate of their wellbeing. Avoid negative feedback in favour of positive reinforcement.
<i>Transformed experience</i>	

Appendix 6***Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model*****Date:** 19.09.19**Critical incident (focus):** 'Pupil reacting negatively to a behavior strategy'

<i>Experience</i>	
<i>Feelings</i> <i>"What are your feelings regarding the experience?"</i>	Overall, I was impressed by the classroom culture and the teacher's clarity and control. When the pupil reacted negatively, I became skeptical of the of the strategy being used. However, I then respected the teacher's decision as they managed to control the situation and justify their reasoning to the pupil
<i>Remember and Understand</i> <i>"Can you list the aspects of the incident in the context of learning?"</i>	This incident made me question the validity of behavior strategies and the impact they can have on learning. If they have a detrimental effect on the learning of a pupil, which it teased with the idea in this incident, then for what and who's purpose are they for. One drawback is that is punishes rather than rewards.
<i>Evaluate and analyse</i> <i>"What could be kept the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?"</i>	I think the strategy worked well in this instance. I like that there is a visual representation of how the pupils are managing their own behavior. And that is the key to this working well. That the pupils accept the boundaries and rules of the "game" and self-regulate.
<i>Conclusions and actions</i> <i>"What are your possible solutions to the issue identified?"</i> <i>"What could be done next?"</i>	The system works well however the surprise element of being awarded or deducted a point can cause upset. One potential solution is to give a verbal reminder that the point system is in place. Furthermore, encouraging pupils to believe that winning the game is achievable.
<i>Transformed experience</i>	

Appendix 7***Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model*****Date:** 20.09.19**Critical incident (focus):** 'pupil swinging on chair and ignoring instructions to stop.'

<i>Experience</i>	
<i>Feelings</i> <i>"What are your feelings regarding the experience?"</i>	The situation was incredibly frustrating. The teacher attempted several times in different ways to get the pupil to stop swinging on his chair. The teacher never once rose his voice which I also found frustrating as it felt like an appropriate action. However, I felt respect for the teachers patience in dealing with the situation and realized that raising your voice would not be effective
<i>Remember and Understand</i> <i>"Can you list the aspects of the incident in the context of learning?"</i>	The pupil did not seem to be fully engaged with the spelling test which would result in a false reflection of his level. Further implications are that his defiance to instructions would not be inductive to his learning.
<i>Evaluate and analyse</i> <i>"What could be kept the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?"</i>	The teachers calm and collected demeanor allowed them to control the situation and not let it escalate.
<i>Conclusions and actions</i> <i>"What are your possible solutions to the issue identified?"</i> <i>"What could be done next?"</i>	Rather than implementing sanctions for carrying out undesirable behavior rewarding positive behavior may prove more effective. Find opportunities to praise the student for listening to instructions and embodying desirable behavior.
<i>Transformed experience</i>	

Appendix 8***Assisted Reflective Conclusions (ARC) Model*****Date:** 27.09.19**Critical incident (focus):** 'Pupils not participating in tidy up time.'

<i>Experience</i>	
<i>Feelings</i> <i>"What are your feelings regarding the experience?"</i>	When I comes to pupils having to tidy up particularly at a young age I first questioned the amount of responsibility they should have in doing so. I quickly realized there are a lot of benefits to actually participating. But was skeptical as to how effective it could be due to the reluctance and ineffectiveness of the pupils.
<i>Remember and Understand</i> <i>"Can you list the aspects of the incident in the context of learning?"</i>	Tidying up teaches pupils that they are responsible for their actions. It also promotes independence and develops person and social skills. It emphasizes the importance of being effective and efficient in what you do
<i>Evaluate and analyse</i> <i>"What could be kept the same to ensure effective teaching and learning in the future?"</i>	The teacher implemented a very effective technique called 'secret mess'. They would pick a specific piece of mess to be tidied and challenge the pupils to find it and clean it in return for a reward. This work surprisingly well as pupils were more motivated and efficient in what they were doing.
<i>Conclusions and actions</i> <i>"What are your possible solutions to the issue identified?"</i> <i>"What could be done next?"</i>	Make this technique part of routine so that it becomes embedded in the pupils behaviors. Develop the idea so pupils work in teams in hope to motivate other pupils and develop team work.
<i>Transformed experience</i>	

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