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Module Code ECAD6007

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Module Title – The Learner: Who am I Teaching?

Title

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.

Introduction

In this essay I intend to critically analyse and dissect a plethora of sources that link to the critical incident that I have recorded when observing in my bridging school. This is any incident in a classroom which when analysed had a critical effect on the teaching practice or on the teaching of the student. I will discover how my incident could have a deeper meaning into the practice and teaching at my bridging school, offering a more self-reflective way to understand how to further develop my practice. This will create a more inclusive and well thought out teaching environment, linking to my areas of interest, paired with readings and research, especially David Tripp's book '*Critical Incidents in Teaching: Developing Professional Judgement*'.

I will be researching areas surrounding ALN (Additional Learning Needs), inclusion and differentiation in this essay whilst also looking into different learning theories (behaviourist, humanist etc.) and how they can be adapted to be more inclusive and innovative. Additionally, a review and analysis of the four purposes and the document 'Successful Futures' by Graham Donaldson will be critically analysed throughout my essay.

The essay description describes a need to critically analyse the holistic development of the young people we are teaching which would require us looking into the teaching standards and curriculum to make sure that we are teaching a holistic, fully inclusive and effective syllabus to our students. Whilst also ensuring that they are treated fairly, respectfully, effectively, with care and kindness as well as making sure they are supported physically, emotionally and mentally. I will begin my essay by looking at the role of critical reflection and how important that is in teaching practice.

The Role of Critical Reflection

From my reading of the critical incident book by David Tripp I have started to personally reflect on why that is so important. Even in his opening few chapters, the incidents he uses as examples are very informative as to why we as teachers need to analyse and reflect on our incidents in class so we can improve our teaching practice and make our lessons more effective and inclusive when dealing with 'difficult' students. One such example from his book that I found very interesting is the 'permission' incident (Tripp, 2011) He talks about the bigger picture here, the idea of focus and enlargement where we sometimes need to scrutinize a point or if we need to zoom out of it and see the bigger picture. This is very important as sometimes it is hard to understand the reason a student does something, this technique can be used to understand the deeper meaning of an incident in class and decide whether we need to zoom in or zoom out to help 'diagnose' the issues that the student is showing. (Tripp, 2011)

Although, this is just one technique that is used to help teachers, both experienced and new, reflect on their lessons and develop their practice. There are other models that can be used to make us think more critically and self reflectively. One that I have read about is the Paula Zwozdiak-Myers framework of reflective practice where she outlines the 9 areas to reflect upon ones practice (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2012) I understand that it is important to reflect on one practice especially to improve and 'maximize the learning potential for students' (Ibid, 2012) However, I think her model is too broad, whereas Kolbs model of experiential learning, which is much more critical allowing you to critique particular areas of ones' practice, is far more attuned to my idea of effective reflective practice. He highlights the importance of experience and observation leading to improved teaching practice (Kolb, 1984, quoted in Zwozdiak-Myers, 2012). Additionally, the more cyclic rather than linear approach provides a constant path of improvement, something which is crucial for us teachers who need to adhere to 'Professional Learning' as seen in the Welsh Professional Standards for Teaching (Welsh Government, 2017)

I would also like to touch upon the new reform of teaching that includes the four purposes that are explained by Donaldson in his document, Successful Futures, and what that means for us as teachers and to the students who it will also affect.

This reform was very much needed in the eyes of Donaldson . Our results from PISA (programme for international student assessment) are described as 'disappointing' clearly demonstrating the need for a curriculum reform (Donaldson, 2015). Something more inclusive and open to all students to be 'ambitious, capable learners; enterprising, creative contributors; ethical, informed citizens and healthy, confident individuals' (Donaldson, 2015) This is a more holistic approach to teaching providing a more inclusive and diversely challenging curriculum that helps all students reach their potential after education .

Observation: School and Class Context

Next, I will go into detail about the school where the incident happened to provide a more thorough analysis and investigation into my critical incident. This will provide more detail surrounding the incident but being aware to maintain anonymity as stated by BERA (British Educational Research Association).

BERA are an association that create guidelines for researchers in the education department to follow. They make sure that the research that is conducted is ethical in all ways it can be, which is why in my following section I will adhere to their regulations as closely as I can. I have paid particular attention to anonymity, quoting BERA (2018, p.27) directly, they state:

'Researchers should recognise the entitlement of both institutions and individual participants to privacy and should accord them their rights to confidentiality and anonymity.' Therefore, I will uphold the schools right to anonymity going forward.

The School I attended is in the county of Monmouthshire . It was a secondary school of predominately English speakers. In their Estyn report from 2017 the school was decreasing in terms of size with just 977 including A level (Estyn, 2017). This has decreased more in recent years. Of those students in the school, just over 12% of them are eligible for Free School meals, and 12% of them are ALN students, both of which are much below the national averages which are 16.5% and 22.7% respectively (Estyn, 2017). This is important information as this helps me understand the community more as well as how it compares to other schools. I would consider this school to be in an affluent area of Wales, which would also suggest that this school has more funding to spend on their students and provide them with better

teaching, as a report by the Education department showed (Department for Education, 2017)

Critical Incident

I now want to discuss my critical incident. It was a first period Year 9 Welsh Class, and it was the lowest set with a mix of ALN, FSM (Free School Meals) and lower ability students. The lesson had begun and there were some late commers to the class. The one student was 10 minutes late but had an explanation however this was not 100% accepted by the teacher, but rather than argue though he asked them to begin the work. When he asked if they had their booklets the one student, who I was no focusing on, did not which the teacher was frustrated by. As a result, the student was told off which resulted in an immediate decrease in engagement. I noted that this student was also an ALN student which immediately made me think of the idea of inclusivity and perhaps differentiation, points that I will discuss further in my literature review.

The incident itself is the students lack engagement within the lesson and how it continued throughout. I observed many instances of lack of engagement and rather than complete their work they laid their head in the arms, they fidgeted, they messed with their work e.g., drawing on their book as well as chatting to other students. This lack of engagement could be blamed as a laziness of the student although I think it goes much deeper than this. I then drew on my readings of Tripp and returned to the idea of 'zooming in' or 'zooming out' (Tripp, D., 2011, p. 35) delving deeper into the possible reasoning that this student was engaging, perhaps their lack of engagement is a result of boredom, research has shown that positive immediacy by a teacher or student can result in higher motivation and thus a higher willingness to learn (Al-Shara, 2015; Witt, P., Wheelless, L., & Allen, M., 2004).

Therefore, the opposite of this idea would result in less motivation and as a result the student is not engaged because of lack of challenge by the work. On the other hand, it may be more to do with the idea of desirable, or in the case, undesirable challenges and a lack of engagement because of inability to do the work.

As I mentioned earlier the student was a ALN student and perhaps the work was too challenging to complete on their own, Elizabeth and Robert Bjork (2009) write about undesirable challenges with problems of recall, so if a student can't understand the work they won't engage. This is what I believe happened, the student wanted to participate when offered help with the work but once left on their own they disengage again. In terms of Donaldson's Four Purposes I would ask, is this student being a 'Ambitious, capable learner' (Donaldson, 2015) perhaps if this student was offered more help, the idea of ZPD and being offered support (scaffolding) as talked about by Vygotsky (Van Der Stuyf, 2002), then the student could engage more and develop the skills needed to complete the work effectively, confidently and become the ambitious capable learner that Donaldson tells us to strive for.

Literature Review

Following on from my critical incident has raised two points of interest and possible exploration for further research and they are including all ALN students in mainstream and the difference and effectiveness of certain learning theories. These will both be explored in and argued in my literature review.

To begin, I want to discuss the point of ALN inclusivity. One of the articles I looked at discusses the point of 'Inclusion or Delusion' and whether it is practical to include all ALN students in mainstream, as is suggested by certain child's rights and government documents that will be highlighted later, or to keep some ALN students in special schools where some would say it is safer for ALN students to be themselves.

If we look at documentation that is provided by UNICEF and the Welsh Government, it does suggest that ALN students should be included in mainstream schooling. UNICEF (1990) points out in article 28 that a child does have the right to a full education, something which may not be provided in a special needs school, and the Welsh Government's Special Needs Code for Practice (2004) writes that if a parent want their child taught in a mainstream school should not be refused unless in a rare cases, this does suggest that students with ALN are encouraged to and have a right to full mainstream education. However, the Same UNICEF (1990) article that suggest that all students have the right to education also states that all children with mental or physical disabilities should have a full life that is dignified promoting active

participation in the community, if a student is victimised in mainstream schooling this is not a dignified way to live nor can they actively participate in society if they feel embarrassed or bullied for what they say; resulting in an awkward situation to consider. Do you put education over the emotional wellbeing? Which should be considered more important?

If we look at the literature, Jenkinson (2002) wrote a book called 'Mainstream or special? Educating students with disabilities' She gives a comprehensive look at the pros and cons of mainstream compared to special needs education. One of the points which was very pertinent was why we use special schools despite the idea of a more 'watered down' curriculum. Parents believe that their students can't function in mainstream schools and this is also supported by other literature like articles on bullying and the idea of stigmatisation of ALN and ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) (Jenkinson, 2002; Humphrey, 2009; Hebron, Humphrey, Oldfield, 2015) These other authors point out some startling facts with ALN students 20 times more likely to be excluded in mainstream compared with special schooling, as well as an increased rate of bullying towards ALN and ASD students. Despite article 28 (UNICEF, 1990), this literature does suggest an inclination towards special school providing better and perhaps, in some cases, cost effective resources and schooling suggesting that article 23 would take precedent. (UNICEF, 1990)

However, the literature does offer an alternative that could work in theory. Another author, Colin McElroy (2015), does broach the idea of mixed ability classes. The idea that we could have students with ALN mixed in with mainstream classes, although McElroy does say this idea is not viable in its present state. But, Jenkinson (2002) has proposed the idea of link schools, where special and mainstream cross with the end goal of reaching full time inclusion in mainstream for the ALN students. An article titled 'Inclusion or Delusion: Can One Size fit All?' by Garry Hornby (2003) suggest a nine-step list of components to reach effective inclusiveness. All these ideas are somewhat linked to scaffolding (Van Der Stuyf, 2002; Humphrey, 2009) having the correct and effective support/techniques in place make sure ALN students are provided for whilst not taking away from the other students. The literature does seem to be conflicted between whether it should have full inclusion or remain separate with Jenkinson saying that it is still unsure models are being made but not fully implementable, and McElroy does think that full inclusion is the way forward.

However, parents are not as on board with the idea and the rights of the ALN students or their guardians must be taken into consideration, Wang (2009) does confirm this idea, in his conclusion he notes how all stakeholders as well as the students themselves must have their agreement and consideration before committing to full inclusion in mainstream schooling.

The next area that will be discussed is the use and effectiveness of different learning theories. One that has a particular interest to the critical incident is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, comparing this more humanist and child centred theory to the more dictatorial theory that Dreikur's classroom management theory, which focuses on the goals of misbehaviour and creating mutual respect in a classroom. Both have elements of humanism and behaviourism learning theory present in their practice but chose different elements within their theories to focus on.

I will begin by highlighting some of the main points of Maslow's theory, and some of the advantages and disadvantages that literature says it has. The main point Maslow highlights is the hierarchy of needs and its categorization, this is highlighted in the book written by Maslow (1970) in his 4th chapter he highlights the importance of each need in terms of motivation. Maslow has written many books on motivation which highlight the different point about why organisms are naturally motivated. There are also more and less important areas of needs for poignant growth, some which is discussed in an article by Saul McLeod (2018) where he quotes Maslow (1943) stating that 'individuals must satisfy lower-level deficit needs before progressing on to meet higher level growth needs.' It's a progression that the teacher must help students satisfy, first with basic needs then later with more developed needs like esteem and self-actualization being at the top. There are some flaws within this idea though as Maslow's first book did offer some very interesting ideas about motivating students it does not account for the non-western teaching styles that differ in certain motivation as highlighted in Robert J. Taormina and Jennifer H. Gao' journal (2013). This is something they later offer discussion about, the different needs and how they related to different cultures.

In the opposing learning theory that is being discussed, Dreikur focuses not wholly on motivation but also on the behaviour goals or more precisely the misbehaviour goals and reasons that students have misbehaved. This was what he

referred to as the social discipline model. The mutual respect between teacher and student, for example Rogers (2017) uses the example of swearing. If the teacher does not swear at students they should not swear at the teacher. If the swearing is purposeful rather than incidental this is different issue that needs to be addressed, perhaps one of power.

There are 4 areas that are highlighted through out literature they are as follows:

Attention seeking behaviour

Power Seeking behaviour

Revenge behaviour

Inadequacy behaviour

These are the four main areas explained by Dreikurs, a model he constructed based on the works by Alfred Adler as seen in Rogers' (2017) dissertation on Dreikurs Classroom Management Theory. These four areas are meant to represent the reason students may misbehave, and from this we as teachers are able to understand how to adapt our practice to include all students. Therefore, this theory is more aligned with behaviourist learning theory, the idea of a goal centred theory does link more with changing social behaviour through praise and reward (O'Neil, Stephenson, 2014)

However, in another article we see that Dreikurs theory does not believe in the use of punishment, which would align more with the behaviourist learning theory as shown in Skinners Rat experiment (McLeod, 2018) the use of punishment in operant conditioning was common to the psychological practice. But as shown in John Martin Rich's (1988) article explains that Dreikurs Social Discipline model does not support the use of punishment, and further supporting this using skinner again he found that animals worked harder when rewarded rather than punished for not completing the task.

Drawing this to a conclusion, learning theory is not set in stone, with no learning theory better than the other. It is more to do with the students you are teaching, and which best applies to them. The one constant between Maslow and

Dreikurs theories is the importance of motivation, praise and the removal or punishment. It is better to reward and praise rather than scold and punish students.

Next Steps

Using what I have researched through the Literature review and the reflection I did after completing the critical incident I now have the chance to be critical about my practice, to review and reflect on how I can use the research to improve my practice further.

I will be using Kolb's reflective cycle to work on my next steps of improvement (Kolb, 1984, quoted in Zwozdiak-Myers, 2012) The first being concrete experience, I had my experience when I was in the classroom, I experienced many different types of learning theory as well as seeing different levels of inclusion for ALN students (see appendices 1 and 3) Neither were wrong or right, just different. Therefore, I decided to focus on those particular areas, they were topics that caught my interest and areas that I knew I needed to further my own knowledge of.

I then moved onto the second stage of Kolb's reflection, the reflective observation. This is similar to Tripp's idea, to be reflective after the critical incident has happened (Tripp, 2011) I did this through the use of the STEER document, I made notes but the reflection of the lessons I had seen came later. And even writing this essay I was still being reflective, considering how my practice could be applied to the research I have completed. To be more inclusive with my ALN students, but only where necessary, I do not want to force them into anything they are uncomfortable with. Also, I will consider the different types of learning theory. I do not think I would ever use punishment, but after having researched the topic more thoroughly, I will use praise and encouragement far more as it is proven to be more effective and can improve engagement and mutual respect from students.

The next area of the reflective cycle is the Actual Conceptualisation. I see this as taking the research and the reflection of the critical incident and making something physical with the information you have. I will make my lesson more inclusive and differentiated as well encouraging engagement and deepening their thinking and learning in a respectful manner. I will be a firm but fair teacher, following more and creating lessons which are more influenced by Dreikurs theory rather than

Maslow's, although the idea of a humanistic learning theory does also interest me so this could be something that I use in the future to experiment with.

And that point leads nicely to the last area that Kolb suggests for reflective practice, which is active experimentation. My Previous point does link to this section also, the idea that I will experiment with the different ideas that I have researched, perhaps I can use some of the scaffolding ideas suggested by Murphy in his article of inclusion or experiment with some types of operant conditioning, the use of sweets when students performing good behaviour. I could try identifying the different misbehaviour goals that Dreikurs focuses on when a badly behaved students starts messing around. It is only through this experimentation will my practice truly improve.

From this use of Tripps critical incident I have seen how useful his techniques can be for reflective practice. I am more aware of my own practice and how a little incident in class can be more poignant than I initially thought. Through the critical incident journal that Tripp suggests we use I can create more engaging and fun lessons because I will understand the true meaning behind certain behaviours. The small incidents can be dissected which will open a whole other issue that would require my teaching practice to change.

Conclusion

Drawing this to a close, this technique of critical incidents as proposed by Tripp is clearly very effective and essential for teachers who want to reflect on their practice and teaching. But despite how useful Tripp's critical incident reflection can be I will take from this essay that general reflection is just as, if not more, important to a teacher's overall development. It is crucial and being paired with innovation, from the teaching standards, is a great way for teachers to remain reflective. It forces us to think of new and interesting way to make our lessons engaging as well as inclusive for all, as I touched upon in my literature review with full ALN inclusion in mainstream. I think this is possible, but we need to be as inclusive as we can be and make sure that our lessons are correctly differentiated.

The use of Tripp's Critical incidents could be the way forward, it would allow teachers to identify issues in their class that may have been missed if they were not being as reflective as they could be. It allows teachers to see if the learning theory

they are using is the right one for the students they are teaching. I have found the use of critical incidents very useful myself, having been in a school a week I can see how useful this technique is. The smallest incidents can have a big effect on students and the flow of a lesson, so addressing these incidents as best as you can using Tripp's methodology could mean that lessons no longer have interruptions or issues that could have been avoided, thus allowing teachers to further understand the dynamic of the class and how each child can be helped and taught most effectively.

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Appendices

Table 1

Date and time, year group: Year 9, 10:05, Welsh
Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context Welsh Class, very early morning, Is the first class of the day. Maybe not going to be as engaged as they could be?
What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work) A student comes in late. The teacher reprimanded the student for disturbing the rest of the class, but the student did offer a valid explanation. This Row did lead to the student disengaging immediately for the rest of the lesson
Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be “under the hood” in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider? I found myself asking why did the student disengage? what is the reason behind this. Why isn’t she engaged in the lesson? What are the reasons for her not wanting to participate in the class? Could the reason be that she was lazy? Or bored? She is an ALN student so perhaps the teacher should focus on inclusivity, ALN needs and differentiation. These are just a few ideas that crossed my mind.
Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here) I noted she would lay her head on her arms during class, perhaps the early morning and laying down could mean that she is simply very tired in the morning. She did fidget quite a lot during the class, again reinforcing my idea that perhaps she is bored in the class, not challenged, or actively engage enough. When given 1:1 support she did enjoy and participate in the lesson, which made me think she needs more support in the class so she can participate in the lesson more.

Table 2

Date and time, year group: Year 8/9 Science 11:25 – 12:25
Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context Science class just after break, would expect a little distraction and extra energy after break but also ready to engage after having a break from lessons.
What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work) Was in a class where we were engaging in practical work. This, because of more practical work over theoretical, got the class more engaged and excited to be in the lesson.
Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be “under the hood” in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider? I would like to explore learning theories in more depth after observing this class. The more practical element of this class had a definite positive outcome on the students. I want to know why? The teacher did many things different to how a conventional science lesson would be done. She encouraged and made the students do their own independent learning; this also encouraged the students to think for themselves.
Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here) The students were encouraged to talk and show us their work, again more to do with their own individual learning and a good way to incorporate student involvement. This also made them more comfortable about talking to us as well as having us observe their lesson. However, there were lots of distractions within this more flexible lesson. This also meant that students were sometimes off task and work wouldn’t be completed fully. This raises the argument of student engagement and involvement over the amount of work they complete.

Table 3

Date and time, year group: Year 11, English Period 4, 12:25 – 13:25
Where and When: Context of the observation – subject/AOLE, general classroom context Before Lunch, English Class, Year 11
What happened: a detailed description of the critical incident (the more detail the better to refer to in your later work) This lesson was a practice lesson for some of the GCSE syllabus they would have on the exam. They weren't engaging fully with this lesson though, made me think why once again. There was a clear lack of engagement and some behavioural issues that cropped up during the lesson, again made me wonder why this happened?
Areas of possible exploration: what you think could be "under the hood" in these incidents? What avenues of research could you consider? From this observation I want to further explore the behaviour management and different ways to engage a class. The Teacher used peer groups to get students talking when they were hesitant at first. They were still monitored by the teacher and any off-task students were brought back on task by the teacher just saying their name. Interesting how this is all that was needed by the teacher to get students to behave. By the end of the class no one was left out and only one student had really misbehaved.
Notes: any details you can note (is it a busy environment, is it after lunch, are there lots of distractions, are directions made explicit - the more you can refer to the better here) I wondered if they weren't talking/engaging because they were anxious to look silly in front their peers. Also, could've been because we, as strangers in the class, we listening to their answer they were reluctant to give answer in front of us. I noted that the teacher was not knocking down any of the students' opinions as this could discourage them from answering in the future, or feel embarrassed because of one of their answers, this was very good in terms of inclusion. The ALN students were appropriately supported and felt comfortable enough to participate in the class.

