

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



Figure One: A teacher at the front of the class teaching a class of pupils

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Introduction

A critical incident is based on a judgement we as people have towards a certain series of events. Within this essay, there will be demonstrations on identifying and some decisive opinions on what has been believed the main reason behind the main critical incidences observed and specifically how behaviour increases when learners are in their non-typical classroom environment. While doing the observations, it was heavily influenced by identifying situations and thinking forward into the reflections, this is due to the critical incidences according to Tripp. (Tripp , 1993) Tripp's theory approaches many different steps in observations and how we as trainee teachers and any qualified professionals should think of how and what we can respond with and whether it is effective or not.

Critical incidences happen everywhere! In everyday lives, we are always observing these types of incidences, whether it is a minuscule incident or incident that requires police action. The most common area of critical incidences is in a school environment, whether that be primary, secondary, or even in higher education. This is due to the large capacity of a classroom and how some people react to certain circumstances. While observing classes in **School X**, there were several critical incidences and numerous ways in which these incidences could have been deflated. Numerous occurrences on these particular days showed just exactly how different a critical incident can be, whether it is in a classroom or during lunch. Also, how different times of the day or lesson can have an effect on these critical incidences.

The Role of Critical Reflection

Critical reflection is a technique used in any profession, it is there for us to think about our thoughts and understandings of our jobs and gets us to delve in deep and appraise our thinking, resulting in so many questions. (University of Waterloo, 2010)

For teachers, professional development involves the constant need to reflect, learn, and take action. This helps further the teacher's knowledge and understanding, with the long-term effect of having a better grasp on teaching and not only that but a way to make your teaching better for the pupils. (Cambridge Assessment International Education , 2021)

Critical reflection also allows us to analyse different viewpoints to help demonstrate and helps support what we have witnessed. Reflective practice comes from the work that was originated by Dewey and Schon. Both theories are used widely for the same reasons, but both have completely different viewpoints on reflective practice.

Originally, Dewey's work talks about how we as teachers need to "Question ourselves and think about what we need to consider in detail." (Dewey , 1910) Dewey goes on to talk about how we should "express our actions with precaution" which is crucial in teaching. The content you do in the classroom and how it comes across should be thought about and strong-willed in every lesson.

Schon, however, presents an alternative view. Schon's theory presents us to identify two main types of reflection. 'Reflection in Action' and 'Reflection on Action' (Schon , 1983) 'Reflection in action' refers to thinking on our feet, which allows the professionals to see caution and steer away from the situation they are trying to resolve. (Iriss, 2015) This gives us time to reflect on unexpected incidences and create numerous ways to try and elevate these incidences. Hoping they don't continue or progress onto serious matters. While 'Reflection on action' on the other hand, involves reflection on the situations after the incident has taken place and allowing you to take a step back and give time to challenge yourself on how and why it happened. It gives the professional time to reflect on themselves and question: why they acted like they did, and should they change their attitude next time. (La Trobe University , 2018)

Many years later, after reviewing these types of reflective practices. Gibbs thought about his methods and ways of reflective practice and created the “Gibbs’ reflective cycle” (Gibbs , 1988) Within his reflective cycle. Gibbs created six main characteristics. The first three steps in the model make us focus on what happened during the incident, and think about the important questions such as, ‘What happened?’ ‘How did other people around react?’ and ‘What did you do?’ (Expert Program



Figure Two: A diagram showing Gibbs’ Reflective Cycle

Management, 2018) While the other three steps, focus on how to improve in future with situations that could be similar incidences that the professional might encounter in their line of work. It is hard not to judge your work and evaluate. However, with Gibbs’ theory, he tries to explain that we should try and think about the before, during and aftermath of these incidences and what do you think as a professional about how other people may be affected in the incident and how they think about it after some time. (Expert Program Management, 2018)

Observation

The critical incident that was witnessed, took place in a school, in a city in South Wales. This school is an English-speaking school, that accommodates all genders from the age ranges of 3-16, with about 1352 pupils, approximately 49% boys while the remaining 51% are female. (Locrating , 2022) There have been no updates from the school’s statistics since 2019, due to the coronavirus pandemic. Based on statistics found, the percentage of the pupils that are entitled to free school meals comes to an average of 25.2%, this statistic is based upon the secondary schools’ numbers and not the primary. (Primary statistics are not available) (My Local School , 2019) This indicates that there is a significant number of children on free school meals as over a quarter of the secondary department’s population are eligible for free school meals. This is shocking as you see that the national average for free school meals in Wales is 18%. (Wightwick , 2022)

Prior to going into the school, to keep critical incidences recorded a document template was created to help write about what observations occurred on that day and what were the results (Appendix A, B, C) this is vital to look back on these for future purposes and look back on some of these incidences and reflect on how we as teachers think differently after the course of a couple of years at these situations and see what we would've done as teachers, with more experience.

The observations then started in the school for 2 days, Monday 26th and Tuesday 27th of September 2022. While others were located with different year groups on both days, the records only showed both days were observed in Year 7 classes. This also helps look at how this year 7 classes are fitting into 'big school' and how do they react in their new environment.

Critical Incident linked to Donaldson's Four Purposes

The main incident, that was recorded throughout the two days came from Appendix B. The incident for recorded on a Tuesday morning in the middle of a Welsh lesson, the start time of the class approximately started at 9:40. This lesson happens before break-time, creating a sort of tiring atmosphere as it is still early in the morning. While some pupils are excited to go to break for various reasons, whether that be because they get some sort of food as it could be the first time some of the pupils can eat in the day. The class were worn down before entering their 2nd class, this was due to the class having mathematics and when asking many pupils how they felt about maths, they weren't enthused many giving responses such as "We don't like the teacher," "Maths is boring," "We don't need this in the future." As the class were about to enter the class, they were informed their Welsh teacher was not present for their lesson and they were allocated to a different classroom as well as a different teacher. When walking into the room, the teacher sat at their desk and didn't pay attention to the class as they were walking in. After the class finished, it was later discovered the teacher was part of the ALN coordination team of the school and is well known as a chilled teacher as she is not a 'typical teacher' from pupils' perspective. The pupils automatically sat in their friendship groups and were talking loudly and were already

quite disruptive to the people that were outside of the classroom doing their work on their desks.

One student, **Student X**, was being very disruptive in the class with many different factors. One example was **Student X** was throwing pens across the classroom to get their peers' attention and making them get distracted, while they were concentrated on their 'work.' After **Student X** realised that their friend was doing what they were told to do in their class, **Student X** decided to pick up with one hand, the Chromebook (that is provided by the school) that they were using and was dangling it from the corner of the screen from a distance away from the table while laughing as their friend was demanding they want their Chromebook back. The response was just laughter and teasing as they carried on dangling the laptop like it was worth nothing. Due to this mishap, the supply teacher went over to them to talk to **Student X** and talked with remorse to put the Chromebook down. **Student X** did as they were told but mimicked the teacher's voice and body language. As a result of this, the teacher focused on **Student X** out of everyone in the class and kept an eye out for them. While the teacher observed **Student X**, the teacher picked up a lot of behaviour points. One of the many incidences that were observed one that stuck out to me was the answering back the teacher was getting from **Student X**, after being told to put the chewing gum in the bin, **Student X** denied having chewing gum and continue to mimic the teacher and proved they didn't have chewing by opening their mouth to prove their statement. The teacher knew they couldn't win this argument so left the situation before it escalated. This caused **Student X** to obnoxiously chew their chewing gum loudly while making direct eye contact with the teacher. The teacher just looked **Student X** gave a disappointed look but went back to doing their own work, ignoring all the noise and incidences caused by the students in that class.

While coming back to this observation, it occurred that there wasn't much learning going on with the pupils and they were not progressing in that class. Whether this was due to the classes' initial teacher set work but also as well the constant chatter and communication in the classroom regarding non-related work. What did they get from that class and did that lesson follow the new curriculum's purpose. 'Successful Futures' created by Graham Donaldson (Donaldson , 2015) focus on 4 main purposes

when it comes to a child's education, and they should have at least 1 of the 4 purposes being taught in each lesson. These purposes are:

Ambitious, Capable learners

Enterprising, Creative contributors

Ethical, Informed citizens

Healthy, Confident learners

How do these purposes link to the critical incident that was witnessed? Even though the incident is behaviour based and not about the lesson overall, we need to link with **Student X** themselves. The main purpose that would appropriately link would be 'Enterprising and Creative Contributors.' Pupils in the classroom were unable to concentrate and pay attention to their work due to the seating of the pupils and their ability to sit wherever they wanted for that lesson. One of the other factors that could link in Student X's behaviour with this purpose is how the pupil stated dominance to the teacher and wouldn't go down without arguing and winning. This shows leadership in the student and how in the future this behaviour even though could be seen as inappropriate now for a school environment, could, in the future, create a human being able enough to create smart and wise decisions and fight for themselves.

Literature review

Behaviour is one of the main sources of critical incidents in any environment. This is no expectation in a school environment. Many sources are being published on this topic with many providing information on how it effects teachers, how to improve their behaviour and maintain the reduction of behaviour.

Evans, Gareth (2014) 'Decline in pupil behaviour is an increasing problem for teachers (Evans , 2014)

Within this report, Evans informs the readers about the effects that a pupil's behaviour has on a teacher. As well, he provides quotations from many people in the profession and companies that strive to help teachers and their struggles. One being Julian Stanley, the chief executive of the 'Teacher Support Network' (Education Support, 2004) and his facts and opinions on the issue of pupil's behavioural issues.

He raises issues such as the effect the teacher's work in school "Bad behaviour prevents teachers from being able to do their jobs effectively" This just demonstrates that teachers have been using the support line to have explained their fury as their job is to teach and they believe they cannot do this due to behaviour of some children.

The subheading is shocking "57% of teachers in Wales have seen a worsening of pupil behaviours" How and why is over half the teacher in Wales seeing the same results and nothing is being done about it? This report links well with the assessment, just because it does not include a way to resolve these issues, it is very eye-opening to see that teachers are struggling with these issues not just in the classroom and during school time. Many teachers are struggling with mental health due to this. Mental health is looked about for the students very closely to ensure that they are healthy. However, what about the teachers? Does their mental health not matter as they are older, and they wanted to become teachers in the first place? NO! That is why Stanley and others created support for these teachers to discuss their issues and problems. Even though this assessment was observed in a secondary setting, the class was a year 7 class and they only transitioned to secondary school 3 weeks prior. This means something that should be result at younger ages in primary school. A teacher even in the report stated that "Pupils from as young as 6 were watching disturbing scenes and playing 18 rated computer games."

Cowley, Sue (2010) 'Getting the Buggers to Behave' Fourth Edition
(Cowley , 2010)

Sue Cowley is an expert on behaviourism and focuses her writing on educational or parental books. She is more than trustworthy and reliable in creating this book as a reliable source to deepen the research on behaviour.

Within this book, Cowley dives into looking at the fundamental's rules of behaviour management, and different techniques that that need to be pushed forward to the pupils. In the books it is organised into parts, with chapters, within that chapter there are numerous sub-sections providing lots of detailed information to help guide teachers or other professions that work with children. Part 3 of the book "The Students and the Settings" has a chapter aimed towards secondary and further educational

behaviour. In detail, they delve into showing them respect, (page 200) even though we see them as children, children want adults to treat them like adults to make them feel more mature as they feel that because they are in a new environment, such as year 7 going from primary to secondary. These new environments create a sense of maturity in them as they believe they have grown up mentally. This book is helpful as at the end of each part, the books provide examples of classroom behaviour real-life situations. These includes positive and also negative examples and commentary on these situations. What makes this section of the book relatable to the critical incident as there for one of the examples is called "chewing gum" (page 223-226) Reading this section of the book 'Situation 1' (page 223) the first part is exactly like the incident that took place in Appendix B and how the teacher dealt with the situation. Even though in the book, the teacher resolved that issue by getting the pupil to put the chewing gum in the bin, even if it resulted in raised voices the teacher got the power and made the pupil put the chewing gum in the bin.

Reflection/ Evaluation & The Next Step

After these days were over, going back to the evidence recorded. Appendices B, shows how even though it was one pupil in the class that was being obstructive, there are a whole room of pupils that were challenged with the task and after reviewing the record it stated that all the students had not finish more than a quarter of their work, (referenced in appendices B) This could've been due to the chatter and lack of focus all the students had because they were using school computers and using it for non-educational usage. Also, the students thought that the work set for them knew that it was not a good product of their time for them to learn. For the supply teacher, it was a lot of work to deal with 30 pupils they were not familiar with the class and expecting the students to give the respect as they would to their Welsh teacher, unfortunately pupils do not understand that just because the supply teacher was not the original teacher does not mean that they should treat the supply like they should. The teacher only got up to deal with the people who were causing trouble in the class and not focusing on the pupils who were just chatting while 'supposedly' doing work.

Linking back to one of the reflective models that were discussed previously, Gibbs' reflective cycle. Even though the class was only for a short-term situation it is still good for the supply teacher to go back and reflect and wonder what happens next time they must teach a class that they are unfamiliar with and given access to computers. The last step in the reflective cycle 'Action Plan' gets teachers to reflect on what are you going to do differently next time and think back around to how they could do better next time or what skills could be required so they don't have to deal with incidences or deal with them before it is escalating. It is important even when you think it is the best lesson you've ever taught, you always need to think about what misconception could go wrong in the next lesson you have with them.

When the lesson was over a few ideas sprung to mind about what this teacher could have done to causes **Student X** from being undistruptive and the whole class to get on with their work. Teacher presented the class very nicely and told the objectives for the lesson. The teacher let them know did what they were told and then followed up by going them if they wanted any help. However, due to this task being a task that requires little to no help none of the pupils asked for help resulting in the teacher being at the desk and on their computer doing their work presumably. The noise then came after realising that the teacher was basically 'just there to supervise and 'wouldn't bother the class'. The teacher did go around the class a few times to tell the pupils to quieten down and see the progress on the class's work. The teacher did everything they could to help with some Welsh words, due to the lack of confidence in the help it was clearly shown that the teacher was a non-Welsh speaker, which isn't uncommon. Maybe a Welsh teacher or someone fluent in Welsh should've covered it. This idea may not have been applicable, due to the last-minute change of teacher and other teachers' timetables, but also the small percentage of Welsh people who cannot speak Welsh, only 29.5% of people from ages 3 and up are Welsh speakers. (Welsh Government , 2021) Regarding the incident with **Student X**, the teacher gave what they think was the right response anyone would do things differently. However, even though **Student X** was not listening, the teacher knew of **Student X's** behaviour and try and deal with the situation. Tried to be respectful to receive respect back, and even though it didn't work the teacher still approached with respect. This is a good method for keeping a calm environment. However, could the teacher have put a bit more assertiveness in getting **Student X** to put their chewing in the bin? Would that have resolved anything? Even though the teacher knew what they were facing and tried to

be reasonable to take time to think and possibly had loads of thoughts and tried to make sense of the situation and came to the conclusion is even though **Student X** was being disrespectful toward the teacher and the friend the teacher decided not to create a scene, taking away from the pupils trying to do their work, even though the pupils in the class were not doing their work. Create a positive outcome from a behaviour standpoint as the talk with **Student X** didn't escalate to a major situation.

Conclusion

After reviewing the essay and looking back at the start even at the observations that took place, how due to the little experience some might have and now becoming student-teachers that are teaching in their schools or even newly qualified teachers can see that going into real-life schools even for those two days just to observe opens your eyes to the community of the school you are placed at for placement or a job, getting a sense of how the curriculum within the school is being used and whether it is praised or is frowned upon with different teaching styles. Most importantly you get a sense of what the students are like in the school. What pupils are high achieving, what students are getting additional help, which pupils should you be aware of in each class and how can you handle them? Throughout this essay behaviour is the key problem like it is in every school, behaviour is something that can and can't be controlled to the severity of it, while some pupils have their bad days some pupils are on a constant and are getting cautions given to inform them just how behaviour in the school is not tolerated and in the outside world, they may get bigger consequences. Behaviour is not going to go away soon. However, teachers need to be taught how we should approach the behaviour, how to deal with it but most importantly, take time to reflect on those situations and analyse so for future reference you can think back to what you did or didn't do that might be a significantly positive outcome.

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Picture Links

Figure One:

<https://teaching.blog.gov.uk/2019/10/08/tips-first-year-nqt-teacher-guide/>

Figure Two:

<https://expertprogrammanagement.com/2019/05/gibbs-reflective-cycle/>