

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.

“A critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event. To take something as a critical incident is a value judgment we make, and the basis of that judgment is a significance we attach to the meaning of the incident” (Tripp,1993, pg8)

Throughout this critical evaluation I will aim to analyse and identify the case study and critical incident that I witnessed based on a specific individual learner. I will aim to relate the nature of the critical incident, which will then lead me on to discuss the relevance of reflective practise in all areas of teaching and how analysing the learner’s subsequent behaviour and their specific outcomes as a result of the incident will in turn have a positive effect on their learning and in due course will benefit their education. As professionals we must understand the use of critical incidents and how we reflect on them during our teaching practise. Reflecting on a critical incident allows us as teachers to become mindful of any pre assumptions and knowledge we have. It allows us to unravel what as teachers we think works well and what we think we may need to work on in order to benefit our learners. The use of reflective practise in teaching allows us to create a positive learning environment for our learners, to make sure they are experiencing positive wellbeing and mental stability. We as practitioners must understand the importance of reflective practise in teaching and how we should aim to use this throughout our career. Throughout this assignment I will delve deeper into the importance of managing behaviour in a classroom and the need for differentiation in a classroom that can subsequently impact learners well-being in education.

The role of critical reflection:

“An ability to be critically reflective is a defining characteristic of being a professional, and therefore facilitating the development of students’ reflective capacities is a key task of practice supervisors and educators.” (Lawson, 2018)

In order to become adaptable encouraging teachers, we must realise the importance of reflective practise in our profession. The role of a critically reflective teacher has a huge impact on our learners. It allows us to be able to develop professional judgement and be critical of our work in a positive effective way and include this in our future teaching practise. It enables us to as Brookfield states “A critically reflective practitioner can stand outside her practice and see what she does from a wider perspective.” (Brookfield,1995). We as teachers must now understand that in order to develop our expertise and professional judgement, we must take into consideration the process of reflection and how we use this to enhance our teaching practise.

“To be able to undertake critical reflection as a teacher and take this through into your practice allows the teacher to move from just experiencing the lesson in to gaining a true grasp and concept of the lesson and its outcome.” (Lawson, 2018, pg22) This can help to improve our future lessons for our children as we have gained a true understanding of the learning

experience and its positives and negatives. The role of a teacher is to educate and inspire lifelong learners, we as practitioners can not expect to help children become these if we ourselves do not allow for reflection and analysis of learning. We must aim to provide children with the ability to reflect and become lifelong learners. If we cannot learn to reflect, we simply can't allow ourselves as practitioners to develop. In a curriculum that's constantly developing and improving we as practitioners must use critical reflection in order to gain knowledge in how we improve and add value to our lessons and learning experiences. "Opportunities to reflect critically and candidly on current practice and being open to others' reflections on how practice can be improved or developed." (Government, 2019, pg4) We can also consider other practitioner's opinions on developing our practice to allow us to work collaboratively with colleagues and create a learning environment that is accessible and continues in on-going development.

OBSERVATION School & Class context.

The critical incident that I observed took place in an English medium Primary school in South Wales. The school's ethos is to nurture, inspire, support and challenge all pupils so that they reach their full potential. I as an observer was sat in a Year 4 Topic lesson held straight after lunch, this incidentally meant that the learners had increased energy and may be more challenging to engage in the task given. The class was made up of 25 pupils who were all in attendance that day. The learners had the option to sit at a table of their choice, I felt that this allowed the learners the opportunity to, as the Four Purposes states, take measured decisions about lifestyle and manage risk, it was also allowing the learner to take their own responsibility of their learning environment. The classroom had an energetic atmosphere which carried through the entire lesson. The learners were all given the same level of work to work on, there was no differentiation given in the lesson to benefit certain individuals. This could subsequently lead on to class disruption and other behaviour issues in the classroom if the learners feel that they cannot engage in the work that has been provided for them. The learners were asked to complete the work in partners once again of their choosing. Is this going to make sure that the learners have a successful experience with the task or are they going to be more focused on who they are working with?

Critical incident linked to Donaldson's Four Purposes:

Donaldson's review suggests that the four purposes 'Guide all future decisions about national and local educational priorities and underpin all teaching and learning in Wales'. (Dauncey, 2015, pg11)

The lesson began with a class discussion reflecting on last week's lesson learning about different plants and trees. The children were asked to recall what they could remember about this subject. Once the recap had finished the teacher then began to explain the task for the day. The lesson was to cut out the different plants and trees and match them to the correct description. The teacher told the children to find a partner and began handing out the worksheets (The observer noticed that there was only one set worksheet for all pupils) Can we expect our learners to become ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives and set themselves high standards and seek and enjoy challenge, if we are not allowing them to

access to work that is logistically applicable to them. The classroom became busy as the children were moving around finding a partner and the equipment required for the task. About 15 minutes in the lesson the observer's critical incident arose. The observer noticed a child in the corner of the classroom using the scissors to pretend to cut their nose completely unengaged in the task, the child's partner began to get very frustrated with this as other child found it very amusing, this then encouraged child with scissors to become more disruptive and not engaged with the task at all. We as teaching practitioners can question is this creating healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society, who also take measured decisions about lifestyle and manage risk. This subsequently meant that said child and their partner did not complete the task. The observer started to question why this incident may have arisen. Did the child find the task too difficult or in fact too easy? What did the child have for lunch? Do they usually work with this partner? Do they always have the same level of task to work on? The lesson was brought to a sharp finish as the pupils had to move onto their P.E session. The observer chose to ask child in question how they found that task to which they replied, "Easy Miss". As practitioners we can begin to critically analyse this situation and question whether we are creating Donaldsons ideas of learners in Wales.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

As part of my research, I have discovered particular areas of interest that I intend to elaborate on and decipher throughout this literature review. My topic of discussion includes behaviour management in a classroom setting and how areas of well-being impacts on a child's learning process. Furthermore, the interaction with children's well-being and behaviour management can have a disruptive effect on a pupil's education.

"Understanding the root cause of the child's behaviour is essential, as without this it is unlikely that any behaviour strategy will be sustainable." (Government, 2012)

There are many theories about behaviour. We as practitioners are aiming to motivate all children to learn. William Glasser states "That all human behaviour is driven by the desire to satisfy five basic human needs: to be loved, to be powerful, to be free, to have fun and to survive" (Glasser, 2017) William goes on to state that we will make choices that we feel will benefit us. However, it could be suggested that some children will make choices based on their socio-economic background and childhood experiences which may not always be entirely beneficial for them. Children can often only be expected to make choices based on what they have already witnessed in life, Nature V Nurture. Bronfenbrenner's theory would agree with this as he states, "Children learn in contexts, and the spaces, places and people they come into contact with have a deep influence on their development." (Hayes et al., 2017, pg30) His ecological system shows how these outside systems have a significant impact on children. Bronfenbrenner has systematically clarified the external influences on a child that contributes to their behaviour. This allows us to understand that a child's behaviour develops as a result of many different factors. Piaget's theory also suggests that children follow behaviour from those around them as he implies "All development transpires from action: that children build their knowledge of the world through interactions with the environment in which they find themselves" (Shelton & Brownhill, 2008, pg14) From this theory we can develop a better knowledge and understanding of children's thinking and actions. Based on these findings we can begin to make our own interpretations of why a child may have a particular behaviour and where this then stems from. As an educational practitioner we can make use of this information when managing behaviour in a classroom. We as practitioners must take into consideration that

children will incidentally follow the behaviour they are surrounded by and it is our duty as teachers to work on this with the children in order to make sure they achieve their full potential in and around the learning environment.

Another influential factor on behaviour in the classroom is the use of positive and negative reinforcements. The use of these can modify a child's behaviour i.e. What they do, what they say, how they respond. Miltenberger states "Human behaviour is the subject matter of behaviour modification. Behaviour is what people do and say." (Miltenberger, 2016, pg6) In the classroom environment we can see a variety of behaviours which can be modified by the use of different reinforcement. Ultimately, we are attempting to modify a child's behaviour in order to help them learn and remove any barriers that behaviour may create and ultimately stop them achieving their full desired potential. "Reinforcement is the process in which a behaviour is strengthened by the immediate consequence that reliably follows its occurrence. When a behaviour is strengthened, it is more likely to occur again in the future" (Miltenberger, 2016, pg10) This is a method for encouraging the re-occurrence of good behaviour, which is an outcome that would benefit the child and the learning environment. Therefore, an educator must reward a pupil for positive behaviour. We as practitioners must remember that we must act on a situation there and then, if we fail to do this it can ultimately have an effect on that child's future behaviour as they may not recall that behaviour again when faced with situations in the learning environment.

"In negative reinforcement, a response or behaviour is strengthened by stopping, removing or avoiding a negative outcome or aversive stimulus." (Skinner, 2014, pg22) As an educator we must be mindful that negative reinforcement is not to be seen as a punishment. We must be sure that when we apply negative reinforcement it is always then credited with a positive outcome, even if that's you then encouraging the child on the changes they have made to their behaviour. We must as practitioners see the importance of positive and negative reinforcement and how it can adapt and improve our learning environment whilst also modelling the behaviour we expect from our children.

We as practitioners must take into consideration the implication children's well-being can have on their learning environment, we need to consider what factors may come under this. "Children's exhibiting behavioural problems which included attention difficulties and conduct problems contributed to the gap in academic performance between poorer and better-off children in primary school" (Education, 2012, pg15) As the journal suggests are children from a lower socioeconomic group having a poorer education because they are not having the support from all who surround them. Can we expect our children to be able to reach their full potential if their well-being isn't at its best. The environment a pupil is learning in has a profound impact on their well-being and therefore their positive attitude towards learning. We need to make sure we are making up for lack of support that some children may be experiencing from lower socioeconomic background, we need to ensure that these children are having an all rounded education even if they may not be experiencing this in possibly their homelife. A pupil in a stimulating environment will be more receptive to learning. "Emotional regulation helps students get along with peers and teachers" (Maureen, 2014, pg12) of the many things that can have an effect on children's education well being must be considered as highly important. In order to access learning then the pupil needs to feel comfortable with the environment and their own emotions. As teachers we must be aware of and continue to pursue a child's well-being. If we try to ensure that our pupils feel confident, then we will help them to be able to learn. As practitioners we must be aware of children that may be experiencing low well-being and be able to encourage those learners through a positive engaging learning environment.

REFLECTION / EVALUATION & NEXT STEPS:

Upon reflecting and evaluating the critical incident I witnessed I have been able to identify several key points that I would like to elaborate on and discuss the importance of. These are the way in which we group children for work, the need for differentiation and the significance of modelling the task and success criteria.

The classroom itself was a small room and 25 pupils were present. There were three large tables consisting of ten pupils on each table. When the teacher asked the children to choose partners, they were allowed to have their own choice. The children were then allowed to choose a place to work. This could have an impact on the quality of the work produced as the children may not have made the appropriate choice of work partner. It could be advantageous as a next step for the development of pupils and the classroom environment to allocate partners based on the teacher's knowledge of the pupils. Also, to allocate specific working areas to allow the children the space needed to function efficiently. This in turn does not mean that we want to take the choice away from the children so a possibility could be to allow them to choose partners on the premise that if they were unable to work in an effective way together the teacher may then adjust the choice of partners.

During the Topic lesson that I witnessed all the children were given the same two worksheets to complete, this involved cutting out a variety of plants and matching them to the correct descriptors. The children were working at a different pace, some being more engaged than others. One pupil was not engaged in the lesson and chose to use the scissors provided for the task to pretend to cut his nose. As a reflecting practitioner I have been able to identify why this incident may have occurred and question as to how this situation could have had a different outcome. I suggest that in order to maintain full class engagement and for each pupil to learn at their own level and achieve their individual outcomes, it may have been advantageous to provide differentiated levels of this task. A suggestion of a possible alternative for the less able pupils may be to provide a different a digital source of this matching activity for them to access, or fewer items for them to match. An alternative possibility for the more able children could be to add an extension to this task whereby having matched the correct description to the picture they then have to classify the items into similar groups.

We as reflecting practitioners must understand the importance of modelling and providing the pupils with a success criterion that must adhere to in order to achieve the expected outcome. It may be beneficial for the teacher to model the expectation of work including the presentation and layout expected. When providing a class with a success criterion it enables the children to gain an understanding of what their teacher expects them to achieve, and how they should go about achieving this.

I believe that in order to be a professional adaptable teacher we must consider the importance of critically reflecting on our lessons delivered to pupils. We must allow ourselves to adapt and amend our teaching practise, in order to improve the quality of our teaching. How can we expect to develop resilient learners if we cannot be critical of ourselves. I intend to use this practice of reflecting and examining my own work to see what went well and what I could improve upon. I believe evaluation and analysis will enable me to develop my future teaching practise. Failure to

use this model may result in a lack of development in my teaching, let's remember we are lifelong learners. It's my intention to make this part of my professional toolbox and continuously question my development in practice.

CONCLUSION:

To conclude, I believe that I have highlighted, focused and reflected on a particular critical incident that I was witness to. I have attempted to research and gain knowledge of how critical incidents have an effect on a classroom environment. As part of this assignment, I explored behaviour management, well-being and positive and negative reinforcement. As teaching professionals, we have a responsibility to meet the Professional Standards which concentrate on the elements necessary for all teachers work. High professional standards in teaching will transfer to a standard of learning that each child can achieve according to their ability. We have a duty to maintain and improve these standards throughout our teaching career. The role and importance of a reflective practitioner is a person who will evaluate themselves honestly and focus future teaching on improving what they could have done differently in order to benefit the children learning experience and make appropriate changes for future lessons. It could be advantageous to collaborate with other teaching practitioners to reflect and develop ongoing practice. We as practitioners must consider the following, "To be able to undertake critical reflection as a teacher and take this through in to your practice allows the teacher to move from just experiencing the lesson in to gaining a true grasp and concept of the lesson and its outcome." (Lawson, 2018, pg22).

We must be mindful that we have attempted to include different perspectives when teaching and to question what we have taught and how we could improve. We must remember as practitioners that we ourselves always have room in our practice to adapt and improve our teaching for our children and create the best possible learning environment for children of all different backgrounds and knowledge.

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